

PUBLIC DOMAIN SHORT WORKS IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH

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HÉMISPHERE NORD.

Les peuples de ces contrées avaient, au temps de leur découverte par les Européens, des gouvernemens, des lois et des religions; mais on n'a trouvé chez eux aucune chronique qui puisse servir à leur histoire. Ils reconnaissaient presque tous un Dieu créateur, et l'immortalité de l'âme; la plupart croyaient à la résurrection universelle, au bon et au mauvais principe, et sacrifiaient au soleil des animaux et des captifs. Quelques-uns étaient circoncis, pratiquaient la confession et autres exercices des Chrétiens, et l'on croit qu'ils avaient une idée confuse du déluge. Il y avait au Mexique des temples magnifiques. Les prêtres, qui étaient aussi médecins et prophètes, pratiquaient la magie et les évocations; ceux de la Virginie possédaient une langue savante qui n'était entendue que du sacerdoce. Dans le cours du seizième siècle, les Européens, ayant fondé des établissemens dans ces pays, y ont porté le Christianisme; cependant il y a une foule de peuplades indigènes et errantes qui sont encore dans l'idolâtrie; on les évalue à 500,000 pour l'hémisphère nord.

HÉMISPHERE SUD.

On a découvert chez les peuples de cet hémisphère, des gouvernemens et des religions, comme chez ceux de l'hémisphère nord, avec les mêmes pratiques, les mêmes institutions sacerdotales, et la même croyance à l'immortalité. Les peuples du Pérou avaient bâti au soleil des temples magnifiques; leurs prêtres, appelés Incas, et successeurs de Manco-capac, leur législateur, fils du soleil, avaient des cordes nouées qui leur tenaient lieu d'écriture. Les Européens qui se sont établis dans ces contrées, au seizième siècle, y ont porté le christianisme. On évalue à 400,000 âmes les peuplades errantes de l'hémisphère sud, qui sont encore dans l'idolâtrie.

Happy Thanksgiving from 19th Century France

from *Domestic French Cookery*, 4th ed. .
by Sulpice Barué; Translator: Eliza Leslie
www.gutenberg.org EBook #34837

STEWED TURKEY, OR TURKEY EN DAUBE ASPARAGUS WITH CREAM FRENCH COFFEE. AN APPLE CHARLOTTE.

STEWED TURKEY, OR TURKEY EN DAUBE

Take a large turkey; lard it and stuff it as for roasting. Then cover it all over with a seasoning made of salt, pepper, nutmeg, and sweet-herbs, parsley and onions, minced fine. Put it into a stew-pan, with some slices of bacon, one or two calves-feet, some onions and carrots, one or two laurel leaves, a few cloves, a beaten nutmeg, salt, pepper, and, if you choose, a clove of garlic. Pour in a pint of water, and a pint of white wine or brandy.

Put on the cover of the stew-pan, and lay round its edge on the outside a wet cloth, which must be kept wet. Stew it slowly for five or six hours or more, and turn the turkey when about half done. When it is finished, withdraw the fire, and skim and strain the gravy. Serve up the turkey with the gravy under it.

A goose done this way is very fine.

A round of beef may be stewed in the same manner. It will be the better for lying all night in the seasoning, and it should be put in to stew early in the morning.

ASPARAGUS WITH CREAM.

Wash and boil four or five bundles of asparagus. Have ready a pint of cream, or a pint of milk, with the yolks of six eggs stirred into it. Take four large rolls of bread, and cut a round piece out of the top of

each. Scoop out the crumb from the inside of the rolls, and put it into the cream with the heads of the asparagus, of which you must save out a sufficient number (with a small piece of the stalk left on each) to stick the rolls with. Make holes in the top-pieces of the rolls.

Fry the rolls in butter. Put the most of the asparagus heads into the cream mixed with the crumb of the rolls, and simmer it awhile over a slow fire. When the rolls are fried, fill their cavities with the mixture. Stick the tops with the remainder of the asparagus, and lay them on the rolls.

Asparagus may be simply boiled with salt, and served up on toasted bread dipped in oil, and eaten with oil sauce.

FRENCH COFFEE.

Let the coffee be roasted immediately before you want to use it, as it loses much of its strength by keeping. Its color, when done, should be a fine bright brown; but by no means allow it to scorch. A cylindrical coffee-roaster that can be turned by a handle, and sets before the fire, is far preferable to a pot or a pan. Grind the coffee while warm.

If you intend to make half a dozen cups of coffee for drinking, measure six cups of water of the same size, and put the water into the coffee-pot. Set it on hot coals, and when the water boils, put in two or three chips of isinglass, or the white of an egg. Then throw in six large tea-spoonfuls of ground coffee. Stir it several times while boiling, and set it several times back from the fire to diminish the boiling gradually. When it has boiled sufficiently, remove it entirely from the coals, pour in a cup of cold water, and then put it in a corner and let it settle for half an hour. Afterwards pour it off from the grounds into another pot (which must first be scalded), and set it close to the fire, but do not let it boil again.

If you intend to serve it up with hot cream, you must make the coffee stronger. While the coffee is clearing, boil your cream or milk, and pour some of it hot into each cup of coffee.

AN APPLE CHARLOTTE.

Pare and core some fine pippins, and cut them into small pieces. Melt some butter in the bottom of a pan. Then lay your apples in it with a sufficient proportion of sugar, beaten cinnamon or nutmeg, and some rose-water or grated lemon-peel. Set the pan in an oven, and let the apples bake till they are quite soft. Then take them out of the pan, and mash them to a marmalade with the back of a spoon.

Cut some thin slices of bread into a triangular or three-cornered shape, and dip them in melted butter. Then butter a broad deep dish, and lay the pieces of bread in the bottom of it, making the points meet in the centre. Spread a thick layer of apple all over the bread; then more bread, covered with another layer of apple, and so on till the dish is full; having a cover of bread on the top. Set it in the oven, and bake it slowly about a quarter of an hour.

A very fine Charlotte may be made by substituting slices of sponge-cake for the bread, or having square sponge-cakes laid round, leaving a hole in the centre to be filled up with gooseberry jelly. If you use sponge-cake, you need not put it in the oven.

THE SCENE BEHIND THE CARRIAGE WINDOW-PANES

by Paul Verlaine, from *Poems of Paul Verlaine* EBook #8426

The scene behind the carriage window-panes
Goes flitting past in furious flight; whole plains
With streams and harvest-fields and trees and blue
Are swallowed by the whirlpool, whereinto
The telegraph's slim pillars topple o'er,
Whose wires look strangely like a music-score.

A smell of smoke and steam, a horrid din
As of a thousand clanking chains that pin
A thousand giants that are whipped and howl,--
And, suddenly, long hoots as of an owl.

What is it all to me? Since in mine eyes
The vision lingers that beatifies,
Since still the soft voice murmurs in mine ear,
And since the Name, so sweet, so high, so dear,
Pure pivot of this madding whirl, prevails
Above the brutal clangor of the rails?

À LA MUSIQUE by Arthur Rimbaud,
from *Poésies complètes*, EBook #29302

__Place de la Gare, à Charleville.__

Sur la place taillée en mesquines pelouses,
Square où tout est correct, les arbres et les fleurs,
Tous les bourgeois poussifs qu'étranglent les chaleurs
Portent, les jeudis soirs, leurs bêtises jalouses.

Un orchestre guerrier, au milieu du jardin,
Balance ses schakos dans la Valse des fifres:
On voit, aux premiers rangs, parader le gandin,
Les notaires montrent leurs breloques à chiffres:

Des rentiers à lorgnons soulignent tous les couacs;
Les gros bureaux bouffis traînent leurs grosses dames,
Auprès desquelles vont, officieux cornacs,
Celles dont les volants ont des airs de réclames;

Sur les bancs verts, des clubs d'épiciers retraités
Qui tisonnent le sable avec leur canne à pomme,
Fort sérieusement discutent des traités,
Puis prisent en argent, mieux que monsieur Prud'homme!

Étalant sur un banc les rondeurs de ses reins,
Un bourgeois bienheureux, à bedaine flamande,
Savoure, s'abîmant en des rêves divins,
La musique française et la pipe allemande!

Au bord des gazons frais ricanent les voyous;
Et, rendus amoureux par le chant des trombones,
Très naïfs, et fumant des roses, des pioupious
Caressent les bébés pour enjôler les bonnes...

--Moi, je suis, débraillé comme un étudiant,
Sous les marronniers verts les alertes fillettes:
Elles le savent bien, et tournent en riant,
Vers moi, leurs yeux tout pleins de choses indiscrètes.

Je ne dis pas un mot: je regarde toujours
La chair de leurs cous blancs brodés de mèches folles;
Je suis, sous leur corsage et les frêles atours,
Le dos divin après la courbe des épaules...

Je cherche la bottine... et je vais jusqu'aux bas;
Je reconstruis le corps, brûlé de belles fièvres.
Elles me trouvent drôle et se parlent tout bas...
--Et je sens les baisers qui me viennent aux lèvres...

ELEVATION, by Charles Baudelaire
from *Les Fleurs du Mal* EBook #6099

Au-dessus des étangs, au-dessus des vallées,
Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers,
Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers,
Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées,

Mon esprit, tu te meus avec agilité,
Et, comme un bon nageur qui se pâme dans l'onde,
Tu sillonnes gaîment l'immensité profonde
Avec une indicible et mâle volupté.

Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides,
Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur,
Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur,
Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides.

Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins
Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,
Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse
S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins!

Celui dont les penses, comme des alouettes,
Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor,
--Qui plane sur la vie et comprend sans effort
Le langage des fleurs et des choses muettes!

Illusionary Love, by Charles Baudelaire
from *The Flowers of Evil*, EBook #36098

When I behold thee wander by, my languorous love,
To songs of viols which throughout the dome resound,
 Harmonious and stately as thy footsteps move,
Bestowing forth the languor of thy glance profound.

When I regard thee, glowing in the gaslight rays,
 Thy pallid brow embellished by a charm obscure,
Here where the evening torches light the twilight haze,
 Thine eyes attracting me like those of a portraiture,

I say--How beautiful she is! how strangely rich!
A mighty memory, royal and commanding tower,
A garland: and her heart, bruised like a ruddy peach,
 Is ripe--like her body for Love's sapient power.

Art thou, that spicy Autumn-fruit with taste supreme?
 Art thou a funeral vase inviting tears of grief?
Aroma--causing one of Eastern wastes to dream;
A downy cushion, bunch of flowers or golden sheaf?

I know that there are eyes, most melancholy ones,
 Wherein no precious secret deeply hidden lies,
Resplendent shrines, devoid of relics, sacred stones,
More empty, more profound than ye yourselves, O skies?

Yea, does thy semblance, not alone for me suffice,
 To kindle senses which the cruel truth abhor?
All one to me! thy folly or thy heart of ice,
 Decoy or mask, all hail! thy beauty I adore!

AMOUR
TROIS PAGES DU LIVRE D'UN CHASSEUR,
by Guy de Maupassant from *Le Horla and Others*, EBook #10775

... Je viens de lire dans un fait divers de journal un drame de passion. Il l'a tuée, puis il s'est tué, donc il l'aimait. Qu'importent Il et Elle? Leur amour seul m'importe; et il ne m'intéresse point parce qu'il m'attendrit ou parce qu'il m'étonne, ou parce qu'il m'émeut ou parce qu'il me fait songer, mais parce qu'il me rappelle un souvenir de ma jeunesse, un étrange souvenir de chasse où m'est apparu l'Amour comme apparaissent aux premiers chrétiens des croix au milieu du ciel.

Je suis né avec tous les instincts et les sens de l'homme primitif, tempérés par des raisonnements et des émotions de civilisé. J'aime la chasse avec passion; et la bête saignante, le sang sur les plumes, le sang sur mes mains, me crispent le coeur à le faire défaillir.

Cette année-là, vers la fin de l'automne, les froids arrivèrent brusquement, et je fus appelé par un de mes cousins, Karl de Rauville, pour venir avec lui tuer des canards dans les marais, au lever du jour.

Mon cousin gaillard, de quarante ans, roux, très fort et très barbu, gentilhomme de campagne, demi-brute aimable, d'un caractère gai, doué de cet esprit gaulois qui rend agréable la médiocrité, habitait une sorte de ferme-château dans une vallée large où coulait une rivière. Des bois couvraient les collines de droite et de gauche, vieux bois seigneuriaux où restaient des arbres magnifiques et où l'on trouvait les plus rares gibiers à plume de toute cette partie de la France. On y tuait des aigles quelquefois; et les oiseaux de passage, ceux qui presque jamais ne viennent en nos pays trop peuplés, s'arrêtaient presque infailliblement dans ces branchages séculaires comme s'ils eussent connu ou reconnu un petit coin de forêt des anciens temps demeuré là pour leur servir d'abri en leur courte étape nocturne.

Dans la vallée, c'étaient de grands herbages arrosés par des rigoles et séparés par des haies; puis, plus loin, la rivière, canalisée jusque-là, s'épandait en un vaste marais. Ce marais, la plus admirable région de

chasse que j'aie jamais vue, était tout le souci de mon cousin qui l'entretenait comme un parc. A travers l'immense peuple de roseaux qui le couvrait, le faisait vivant, bruisant, houleux, on avait tracé d'étroites avenues où les barques plates, conduites et dirigées avec des perches, passaient, muettes, sur l'eau morte, frôlaient les joncs, faisaient fuir les poissons rapides à travers les herbes et plonger les poules sauvages dont la tête noire et pointue disparaissait brusquement.

J'aime l'eau d'une passion désordonnée: la mer, bien que trop grande, trop remuante, impossible à posséder, les rivières si jolies mais qui passent, qui fuient, qui s'en vont, et les marais surtout où palpète toute l'existence inconnue des bêtes aquatiques. Le marais c'est un monde entier sur la terre, monde différent, qui a sa vie propre, ses habitants sédentaires, et ses voyageurs de passage, ses voix, ses bruits et son mystère surtout. Rien n'est plus troublant, plus inquiétant, plus effrayant, parfois, qu'un marécage. Pourquoi cette peur qui plane sur ces plaines basses couvertes d'eau? Sont-ce les vagues rumeurs des roseaux, les étranges feux follets, le silence profond qui les enveloppe dans les nuits calmes, ou bien les brumes bizarres, qui traînent sur les joncs comme des robes de mortes, ou bien encore l'imperceptible clapotement, si léger, si doux, et plus terrifiant parfois que le canon des hommes ou que le tonnerre du ciel, qui fait ressembler les marais à des pays de rêve, à des pays redoutables cachant un secret inconnaissable et dangereux.

Non. Autre chose s'en dégage, un autre mystère, plus profond, plus grave, flotte dans les brouillards épais, le mystère même de la création peut-être! Car n'est-ce pas dans l'eau stagnante et fangeuse, dans la lourde humidité des terres mouillées sous la chaleur du soleil, que remua, que vibra, que s'ouvrit au jour le premier germe de vie?

* * * * *

J'arrivai le soir chez mon cousin. Il gelait à fendre les pierres.

Pendant le dîner, dans la grande salle dont les buffets, les murs, le plafond étaient couverts d'oiseaux empaillés, aux ailes étendues, ou perchés sur des branches accrochées par des clous, éperviers, hérons, hiboux, engoulevents, buses, tiercelets, vautours, faucons, mon cousin pareil lui même à un étrange animal des pays froids, vêtu d'une jaquette en

peau de phoque, me racontait les dispositions qu'il avait prises pour cette nuit même.

Nous devions partir à trois heures et demie du matin, afin d'arriver vers quatre heures et demie au point choisi pour notre affût. On avait construit à cet endroit une hutte avec des morceaux de glace pour nous abriter un peu contre le vent terrible qui précède le jour, ce vent chargé de froid qui déchire la chair comme des scies, la coupe comme des lames, la pique comme des aiguillons empoisonnés, la tord comme des tenailles, et la brûle comme du feu.

Mon cousin se frottait les mains: «Je n'ai jamais vu une gelée pareille, disait-il, nous avons déjà douze degrés sous zéro à six heures du soir.»

J'allai me jeter sur mon lit aussitôt après le repas, et je m'endormis à la lueur d'une grande flamme flambant dans ma cheminée.

A trois heures sonnantes on me réveilla. J'endossai, à mon tour, une peau de mouton et je trouvai mon cousin Karl couvert d'une fourrure d'ours. Après avoir avalé chacun deux tasses de café brûlant suivies de deux verres de fine champagne, nous partîmes accompagnés d'un garde et de nos chiens: Plongeon et Pierrot.

Dès les premiers pas dehors, je me sentis glacé jusqu'aux os. C'était une de ces nuits où la terre semble morte de froid. L'air gelé devient résistant, palpable tant il fait mal; aucun souffle ne l'agite; il est figé, immobile; il mord, traverse, dessèche, tue les arbres, les plantes, les insectes, les petits oiseaux eux-mêmes qui tombent des branches sur le sol dur, et deviennent durs aussi, comme lui, sous l'étreinte du froid.

La lune, à son dernier quartier, toute penchée sur le côté, toute pâle, paraissait défaillante au milieu de l'espace, et si faible qu'elle ne pouvait plus s'en aller, qu'elle restait là-haut, saisie aussi, paralysée par la rigueur du ciel. Elle répandait une lumière sèche et triste sur le monde, cette lueur mourante et blafarde qu'elle nous jette chaque mois, à la fin de sa résurrection.

Nous allions, côte à côte, Karl et moi, le dos courbé, les mains dans nos

poches et le fusil sous le bras. Nos chaussures enveloppées de laine afin de pouvoir marcher sans glisser sur la rivière gelée ne faisaient aucun bruit; et je regardais la fumée blanche que faisait l'haleine de nos chiens.

Nous fûmes bientôt au bord du marais, et nous nous engageâmes dans une des allées de roseaux secs qui s'avancait à travers cette forêt basse.

Nos coudes, frôlant les longues feuilles en rubans, laissaient derrière nous un léger bruit; et je me sentis saisi, comme je ne l'avais jamais été, par l'émotion puissante et singulière que font naître en moi les marécages. Il était mort, celui-là, mort de froid, puisque nous marchions dessus, au milieu de son peuple de joncs desséchés.

Tout à coup, au détour d'une des allées, j'aperçus la hutte de glace qu'on avait construite pour nous mettre à l'abri. J'y entrai, et comme nous avions encore près d'une heure à attendre le réveil des oiseaux errants, je me roulai dans ma couverture pour essayer de me réchauffer.

Alors, couché sur le dos, je me mis à regarder la lune déformée, qui avait quatre cornes à travers les parois vaguement transparentes de cette maison polaire.

Mais le froid du marais gelé, le froid de ces murailles, le froid tombé du firmament me pénétra bientôt d'une façon si terrible, que je me mis à tousser.

Mon cousin Karl fut pris d'inquiétude: «Tant pis si nous ne tuons pas grand'-chose aujourd'hui, dit-il, je ne veux pas que tu t'enrhumes; nous allons faire du feu.» Et il donna l'ordre au garde de couper des roseaux.

On en fit un tas au milieu de notre hutte défoncée au sommet pour laisser échapper la fumée; et lorsque la flamme rouge monta le long des cloisons claires de cristal, elles se mirent à fondre, doucement, à peine, comme si ces pierres de glace avaient sué. Karl, resté dehors, me cria: «Viens donc voir!» Je sortis et je restai éperdu d'étonnement. Notre cabane, en forme de cône, avait l'air d'un monstrueux diamant au coeur de feu poussé soudain sur l'eau gelée du marais. Et dedans, on voyait deux formes fantastiques, celles de nos chiens qui se chauffaient.

Mais un cri bizarre, un cri perdu, un cri errant, passa sur nos têtes. La lueur de notre foyer réveillait les oiseaux sauvages.

Rien ne m'émeut comme cette première clameur de vie qu'on ne voit point et qui court dans l'air sombre, si vite, si loin, avant qu'apparaisse à l'horizon la première clarté des jours d'hiver. Il me semble à cette heure glaciale de l'aube, que ce cri fuyant emporté par les plumes d'une bête est un soupir de l'âme du monde!

Karl disait: «Éteignez le feu. Voici l'aurore.»

Le ciel en effet commençait à pâlir, et les bandes de canards traînaient de longues taches rapides, vite effacées, sur le firmament.

Une lueur éclata dans la nuit, Karl venait de tirer; et les deux chiens s'élancèrent.

Alors, de minute en minute, tantôt lui et tantôt moi, nous ajustions vivement dès qu'apparaissait au-dessus des roseaux l'ombre d'une tribu volante. Et Pierrot et Plongeon, essoufflés et joyeux, nous rapportaient des bêtes sanglantes dont l'oeil quelquefois nous regardait encore.

Le jour s'était levé, un jour clair et bleu; le soleil apparaissait au fond de la vallée et nous songions à repartir, quand deux oiseaux, le col droit et les ailes tendues, glissèrent brusquement sur nos têtes. Je tirai. Un d'eux tomba presque à mes pieds. C'était une sarcelle au ventre d'argent. Alors, dans l'espace au-dessus de moi, une voix, une voix d'oiseau cria. Ce fut une plainte courte, répétée, déchirante; et la bête, la petite bête épargnée se mit à tourner dans le bleu du ciel au-dessus de nous en regardant sa compagne morte que je tenais entre mes mains.

Karl, à genoux, le fusil à l'épaule, l'oeil ardent, la guettait, attendant qu'elle fût assez proche.

--Tu as tué la femelle, dit-il, le mâle ne s'en ira pas.

Certes, il ne s'en allait point; il tournoyait toujours, et pleurait autour de nous. Jamais gémissement de souffrance ne me déchira le coeur comme

l'appel désolé, comme le reproche lamentable de ce pauvre animal perdu dans l'espace.

Parfois, il s'enfuyait sous la menace du fusil qui suivait son vol; il semblait prêt à continuer sa route, tout seul à travers le ciel. Mais ne s'y pouvant décider il revenait bientôt pour chercher sa femelle.

--Laisse-la par terre, me dit Karl, il approchera tout à l'heure.

Il approchait, en effet, insouciant du danger, affolé par son amour de bête, pour l'autre bête que j'avais tuée.

Karl tira; ce fut comme si on avait coupé la corde qui tenait suspendu l'oiseau. Je vis une chose noire qui tombait; j'entendis dans les roseaux le bruit d'une chute. Et Pierrot me le rapporta.

Je les mis, froids déjà, dans le même carnier... et je repartis, ce jour-là, pour Paris.

ABANDONED, by Guy De Maupassant
from *International Short Stories: French, by Various* EBook #10577

"I really think you must be mad, my dear, to go for a country walk in such weather as this. You have had some very strange notions for the last two months. You drag me to the seaside in spite of myself, when you have never once had such a whim during all the forty-four years that we have been married. You chose Fécamp, which is a very dull town, without consulting me in the matter, and now you are seized with such a rage for walking, you who hardly ever stir out on foot, that you want to take a country walk on the hottest day of the year. Ask d'Apréval to go with you, as he is ready to gratify all your whims. As for me, I am going back to have a nap."

Madame de Cadour turned to her old friend and said:

"Will you come with me, Monsieur d'Apréval?"

He bowed with a smile, and with all the gallantry of former years:

"I will go wherever you go," he replied.

"Very well, then, go and get a sunstroke," Monsieur de Cadour said; and he went back to the Hôtel des Bains to lie down for an hour or two.

As soon as they were alone, the old lady and her old companion set off, and she said to him in a low voice, squeezing his hand:

"At last! at last!"

"You are mad," he said in a whisper. "I assure you that you are mad. Think of the risk you are running. If that man--"

She started.

"Oh! Henri, do not say that man, when you are speaking of him."

"Very well," he said abruptly, "if our son guesses anything, if he has any suspicions, he will have you, he will have us both in his power. You have

got on without seeing him for the last forty years. What is the matter with you to-day?"

They had been going up the long street that leads from the sea to the town, and now they turned to the right, to go to Etretat. The white road stretched in front of them under a blaze of brilliant sunshine, so they went on slowly in the burning heat. She had taken her old friend's arm, and was looking straight in front of her, with a fixed and haunted gaze, and at last she said:

"And so you have not seen him again, either?"

"No, never."

"Is it possible?"

"My dear friend, do not let us begin that discussion again. I have a wife and children and you have a husband, so we both of us have much to fear from other people's opinion."

She did not reply; she was thinking of her long past youth and of many sad things that had occurred. How well she recalled all the details of their early friendship, his smiles, the way he used to linger, in order to watch her until she was indoors. What happy days they were, the only really delicious days she had ever enjoyed, and how quickly they were over!

And then--her discovery--of the penalty she paid! What anguish!

Of that journey to the South, that long journey, her sufferings, her constant terror, that secluded life in the small, solitary house on the shores of the Mediterranean, at the bottom of a garden, which she did not venture to leave. How well she remembered those long days which she spent lying under an orange tree, looking up at the round, red fruit, amid the green leaves. How she used to long to go out, as far as the sea, whose fresh breezes came to her over the wall, and whose small waves she could hear lapping on the beach. She dreamed of its immense blue expanse sparkling under the sun, with the white sails of the small vessels, and a mountain on the horizon. But she did not dare to go outside the gate. Suppose anybody had recognized her!

And those days of waiting, those last days of misery and expectation! The impending suffering, and then that terrible night! What misery she had endured, and what a night it was! How she had groaned and screamed! She could still see the pale face of her lover, who kissed her hand every moment, and the clean-shaven face of the doctor and the nurse's white cap.

And what she felt when she heard the child's feeble cries, that wail, that first effort of a human's voice!

And the next day! the next day! the only day of her life on which she had seen and kissed her son; for, from that time, she had never even caught a glimpse of him.

And what a long, void existence hers had been since then, with the thought of that child always, always floating before her. She had never seen her son, that little creature that had been part of herself, even once since then; they had taken him from her, carried him away, and had hidden him. All she knew was that he had been brought up by some peasants in Normandy, that he had become a peasant himself, had married well, and that his father, whose name he did not know, had settled a handsome sum of money on him.

How often during the last forty years had she wished to go and see him and to embrace him! She could not imagine to herself that he had grown! She always thought of that small human atom which she had held in her arms and pressed to her bosom for a day.

How often she had said to M. d'Apreval: "I cannot bear it any longer; I must go and see him."

But he had always stopped her and kept her from going. She would be unable to restrain and to master herself; their son would guess it and take advantage of her, blackmail her; she would be lost.

"What is he like?" she said.

"I do not know. I have not seen him again, either."

"Is it possible? To have a son and not to know him; to be afraid of him and to reject him as if he were a disgrace! It is horrible."

They went along the dusty road, overcome by the scorching sun, and continually ascending that interminable hill.

"One might take it for a punishment," she continued; "I have never had another child, and I could no longer resist the longing to see him, which has possessed me for forty years. You men cannot understand that. You must remember that I shall not live much longer, and suppose I should never see him, never have seen him! ... Is it possible? How could I wait so long? I have thought about him every day since, and what a terrible existence mine has been! I have never awakened, never, do you understand, without my first thoughts being of him, of my child. How is he? Oh, how guilty I feel toward him! Ought one to fear what the world may say in a case like this? I ought to have left everything to go after him, to bring him up and to show my love for him. I should certainly have been much happier, but I did not dare, I was a coward. How I have suffered! Oh, how those poor, abandoned children must hate their mothers!"

She stopped suddenly, for she was choked by her sobs. The whole valley was deserted and silent in the dazzling light and the overwhelming heat, and only the grasshoppers uttered their shrill, continuous chirp among the sparse yellow grass on both sides of the road.

"Sit down a little," he said.

She allowed herself to be led to the side of the ditch and sank down with her face in her hands. Her white hair, which hung in curls on both sides of her face, had become tangled. She wept, overcome by profound grief, while he stood facing her, uneasy and not knowing what to say, and he merely murmured: "Come, take courage."

She got up.

"I will," she said, and wiping her eyes, she began to walk again with the uncertain step of an elderly woman.

A little farther on the road passed beneath a clump of trees, which hid a few houses, and they could distinguish the vibrating and regular blows of a blacksmith's hammer on the anvil; and presently they saw a wagon standing on the right side of the road in front of a low cottage, and two men shoeing a horse under a shed.

Monsieur d'Apreal went up to them.

"Where is Pierre Benedict's farm?" he asked.

"Take the road to the left, close to the inn, and then go straight on; it is the third house past Poret's. There is a small spruce fir close to the gate; you cannot make a mistake."

They turned to the left. She was walking very slowly now, her legs threatened to give way, and her heart was beating so violently that she felt as if she should suffocate, while at every step she murmured, as if in prayer:

"Oh! Heaven! Heaven!"

Monsieur d'Apreal, who was also nervous and rather pale, said to her somewhat gruffly:

"If you cannot manage to control your feelings, you will betray yourself at once. Do try and restrain yourself."

"How can I?" she replied. "My child! When I think that I am going to see my child."

They were going along one of those narrow country lanes between farmyards, that are concealed beneath a double row of beech trees at either side of the ditches, and suddenly they found themselves in front of a gate, beside which there was a young spruce fir.

"This is it," he said.

She stopped suddenly and looked about her. The courtyard, which was planted with apple trees, was large and extended as far as the small thatched dwelling house. On the opposite side were the stable, the barn, the cow house and the poultry house, while the gig, the wagon and the manure cart were under a slated outhouse. Four calves were grazing under the shade of the trees and black hens were wandering all about the enclosure.

All was perfectly still; the house door was open, but nobody was to be seen, and so they went in, when immediately a large black dog came out of a barrel that was standing under a pear tree, and began to bark furiously.

There were four bee-hives on boards against the wall of the house.

Monsieur d'Apreeval stood outside and called out:

"Is anybody at home?"

Then a child appeared, a little girl of about ten, dressed in a chemise and a linen petticoat, with dirty, bare legs and a timid and cunning look. She remained standing in the doorway, as if to prevent any one going in.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Is your father in?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"And your mother?"

"Gone after the cows."

"Will she be back soon?"

"I don't know."

Then suddenly the lady, as if she feared that her companion might force her to return, said quickly:

"I shall not go without having seen him."

"We will wait for him, my dear friend."

As they turned away, they saw a peasant woman coming toward the house, carrying two tin pails, which appeared to be heavy and which glistened brightly in the sunlight.

She limped with her right leg, and in her brown knitted jacket, that was faded by the sun and washed out by the rain, she looked like a poor, wretched, dirty servant.

"Here is mamma," the child said.

When she got close to the house, she looked at the strangers angrily and suspiciously, and then she went in, as if she had not seen them. She looked old and had a hard, yellow, wrinkled face, one of those wooden faces that country people so often have.

Monsieur d'Apreval called her back.

"I beg your pardon, madame, but we came in to know whether you could sell us two glasses of milk."

She was grumbling when she reappeared in the door, after putting down her pails.

"I don't sell milk," she replied.

"We are very thirsty," he said, "and madame is very tired. Can we not get something to drink?"

The peasant woman gave them an uneasy and cunning glance and then she made up her mind.

"As you are here, I will give you some," she said, going into the house, and almost immediately the child came out and brought two chairs, which she placed under an apple tree, and then the mother, in turn brought out two bowls of foaming milk, which she gave to the visitors. She did not return to the house, however, but remained standing near them, as if to watch them and to find out for what purpose they had come there.

"You have come from Fécamp?" she said.

"Yes," Monsieur d'Apréval replied, "we are staying at Fécamp for the summer."

And then, after a short silence he continued:

"Have you any fowls you could sell us every week?"

The woman hesitated for a moment and then replied:

"Yes, I think I have. I suppose you want young ones?"

"Yes, of course."

"What do you pay for them in the market?"

D'Apréval, who had not the least idea, turned to his companion:

"What are you paying for poultry in Fécamp, my dear lady?"

"Four francs and four francs fifty centimes," she said, her eyes full of tears, while the farmer's wife, who was looking at her askance, asked in much surprise:

"Is the lady ill, as she is crying?"

He did not know what to say, and replied with some hesitation:

"No--no--but she lost her watch as we came along, a very handsome watch, and that troubles her. If anybody should find it, please let us know."

Mother Benedict did not reply, as she thought it a very equivocal sort of answer, but suddenly she exclaimed:

"Oh, here is my husband!"

She was the only one who had seen him, as she was facing the gate. D'Apréval started and Madame de Cadour nearly fell as she turned round suddenly on her chair.

A man bent nearly double, and out of breath, stood there, ten yards from them, dragging a cow at the end of a rope. Without taking any notice of the visitors, he said:

"Confound it! What a brute!"

And he went past them and disappeared in the cow house.

Her tears had dried quickly as she sat there startled, without a word and with the one thought in her mind, that this was her son, and D'Apréval, whom the same thought had struck very unpleasantly, said in an agitated voice:

"Is this Monsieur Benedict?"

"Who told you his name?" the wife asked, still rather suspiciously.

"The blacksmith at the corner of the highroad," he replied, and then they were all silent, with their eyes fixed on the door of the cow house, which formed a sort of black hole in the wall of the building. Nothing could be seen inside, but they heard a vague noise, movements and footsteps and the sound of hoofs, which were deadened by the straw on the floor, and soon the man reappeared in the door, wiping his forehead, and came toward the house with long, slow strides. He passed the strangers without seeming to notice them and said to his wife:

"Go and draw me a jug of cider; I am very thirsty."

Then he went back into the house, while his wife went into the cellar and

left the two Parisians alone.

"Let us go, let us go, Henri," Madame de Cadour said, nearly distracted with grief, and so d'Apréval took her by the arm, helped her to rise, and sustaining her with all his strength, for he felt that she was nearly fainting, he led her out, after throwing five francs on one of the chairs.

As soon as they were outside the gate, she began to sob and said, shaking with grief:

"Oh! oh! is that what you have made of him?"

He was very pale and replied coldly:

"I did what I could. His farm is worth eighty thousand francs, and that is more than most of the sons of the middle classes have."

They returned slowly, without speaking a word. She was still crying; the tears ran down her cheeks continually for a time, but by degrees they stopped, and they went back to Fécamp, where they found Monsieur de Cadour

waiting dinner for them. As soon as he saw them, he began to laugh and exclaimed:

"So my wife has had a sunstroke, and I am very glad of it. I really think she has lost her head for some time past!"

Neither of them replied, and when the husband asked them, rubbing his hands:

"Well, I hope that, at least, you have had a pleasant walk?"

Monsieur d'Apréval replied:

"A delightful walk, I assure you; perfectly delightful."

Le Loup et le Chien, by Jean de La Fontaine
from *Fables de La Fontaine*, EBook #17941

Un loup n'avait que les os et la peau,
Tant les chiens faisaient bonne garde.
Ce loup rencontre un dogue aussi puissant que beau,
Gras, poli, qui s'était fourvoyé par mégarde.
L'attaquer, le mettre en quartiers,
Sire loup l'eût fait volontiers;
Mais il fallait livrer bataille,
Et le matin était de taille
A se défendre hardiment.
Le loup donc, l'aborde humblement,
Entre en propos, et lui fait compliment
Sur son embonpoint, qu'il admire.
«Il ne tiendra qu'à vous, beau sire,
D'être aussi gras que moi, lui répartit le chien.
Quittez les bois, vous ferez bien:
Vos pareils y sont misérables,
Cancres, hères, et pauvres diables,
Dont la condition est de mourir de faim.
Car quoi? rien d'assuré; point de franche lippée;
Tout à la pointe de l'épée.
Suivez moi, vous aurez un bien meilleur destin.»
Le loup reprit: «Que me faudra-t-il faire?
--Presque rien, dit le chien: donner la chasse aux gens
Portant bâtons et mendiants;
Flatter ceux du logis, à son maître complaire:
Moyennant quoi votre salaire
Sera force reliefs de toutes les façons:
Os de poulets, os de pigeons,
Sans parler de mainte caresse.»

Le loup déjà se forge une félicité
Qui le fait pleurer de tendresse
Chemin faisant, il vit le cou du chien pelé.
«Qu'est-ce là? lui dit-il.--Rien.--Quoi? rien?--Peu de chose.
--Mais encor?--Le collier dont je suis attaché
De ce que vous voyez est peut-être la cause.
--Attaché? dit le loup: vous ne courez donc pas
Où vous voulez?--Pas toujours; mais qu'importe?
--Il importe si bien, que de tous vos repas
Je ne veux en aucune sorte,
Et ne voudrais pas même à ce prix un trésor.»
Cela dit, maître loup s'enfuit, et court encor.

THE BLUE BIRD: A FRENCH FAIRY TALE by Edmund Dulac
from *Edmund Dulac's Fairy-Book* EBook #25513

There was once upon a time a King who was tremendously rich both in money and lands. His wife, the Queen, died, and left him inconsolable. He shut himself up for eight days in a little room, and banged his head against the wall so much that it was believed he would kill himself, so grieved was he at his loss.

All his subjects resolved between themselves to go and see him, and they did. Some said that he could show his grief in a less painful manner. Others made speeches grave and serious, but not one of them made any impression on the widowed King. Eventually there was presented to him a woman dressed in the deepest mourning, and she cried and moaned so long and so loud that she caused no little surprise.

She said to the King that she did not like the others coming to ask him to stop his crying, for nothing was more just than that he should cry over the loss of a good wife; and that as for her, who once had the very best of husbands, and had lost him, she would cry for him as long as she had eyes in her head to cry with; and immediately she let out and redoubled her sobs, and the King, following her example, did the same.

Each one recounted to the other the good qualities of their dear dead ones; so much so that at last there was nothing more could be found to say about their losses and their great sorrow. In the end the widow lifted her deep veil, and the poor afflicted King gazed at the afflicted one, who kept turning and turning her great blue eyes with long black lashes. The King watched her with deep attention; and little by little he talked less of his lost Queen, until at last he forgot to talk of her at all.

The widow then said that for ever she would cry and mourn for her husband, but the King begged her not to go to that limit and immortalise her sorrow. In the end he astonished her by saying that he would marry her, and that the black would be changed into green and pink, the colour of roses. It suffices to say that the King did as the stories tell: did all that was possible and all that she wished.

Now the King had but one daughter of his first marriage, and she was considered one of the eight wonders of the world; her name was Florine, because she resembled a beautiful flower: she was fresh, young and lovely. She was always dressed in the most beautiful transparent clothes, and with garlands of flowers in her hair, which made a beautiful effect. She was only fifteen years old when the King married again.

The new Queen also had, by her first husband, a daughter, who had been brought up by her godmother, the fairy Soussio; but she was neither beautiful nor gracious. The girl's name was Truitonne, because her face was so like the face of a trout, and her hair was so full of grease that it was impossible to touch it; and her skin simply ran with oil. But the Queen did not love her any the less. All she could do was to talk of the charming Truitonne, and how Florine had all sorts of advantages over her; and the Queen became desperate, and sought every possible way to make the King see faults in Florine.

One day the King said to the Queen that Florine and Truitonne were big enough to marry now, and that the first Prince who came to the court should have one of the two Princesses in marriage.

'I maintain,' said the Queen, 'that my daughter shall be the one to get the trousseau; she is the elder, and she is a million times more amiable, and those are the points that matter, after all.'

The King, who hated disputes, said that it was well, and that she was her own mistress.

Some time afterwards, news came that Prince Charming had arrived. Never did a Prince display such gallantry and magnificence; his manner and looks were in keeping with the name he bore. When the Queen heard of this handsome Prince she employed all the dressmakers and tailors to dress Truitonne, and make her presentable, and she begged the King that Florine should have nothing at all new. Her one thought was to have all the beautiful clothes ready before the arrival of Prince Charming at court.

When he came the Queen received him in all pomp and splendour, and presented to him her daughter more brilliant than the sun, and more ugly than she was usually, because of all the jewels she had on.

Prince Charming turned away his eyes; the Queen tried to persuade him that the Princess pleased him very much. But he demanded to know if there was not another Princess called Florine? 'Yes,' said Truitonne, pointing with her finger; 'see, there she is, hidden away, because she is not good.'

Florine reddened, and looked so beautiful, so beautiful, that Prince Charming forgot himself. He bowed the knee and made a low curtsy to the Princess. 'Madam,' said he, 'your incomparable beauty is too much; but for you I should have sought help in a strange land.'

'Seigneur,' replied the Princess, 'I am sorry that I am not dressed in a proper manner, but I have only my old clothes; yet I thank you for asking to see me.'

'It would be impossible,' said Prince Charming, 'that any one once seeing you could have eyes for anything else than so beautiful a Princess.'

'Ah!' said the Queen, irritated, 'I do well wasting my time listening to you. Believe me, seigneur, Florine is also a coquette; she does not deserve that you should be so gallant to her.'

Prince Charming understood the motives of the Queen in speaking of Florine in this way. He was not in a position to prove the truth, but he let it be seen that all his admiration was for Florine.

The Queen and Truitonne were very upset to see that he preferred Princess Florine. So, when Princess Florine left the company of Prince Charming, the Queen with impatience waited for her to return to her room. There were hidden four men with masks over their faces, and they had orders to take the Princess Florine away on a journey, to await the pleasure of Prince Charming, so that she would please him better and would make him a better spouse.

The Queen then went to the Prince and told him that the Princess was a coquette, and had a bad temper; that she tormented the servants, and did not know how to behave herself; that she was avaricious, and preferred to be dressed like a little shepherdess rather than like a Princess.

To all this Prince Charming listened. 'But,' said he, 'it would be impossible for so beautiful and amiable a girl to be all that you say. How could that be true of one with such modest grace and beauty? even though she be dressed in a humble little frock. That is not a thing that touches me very much. It pains me far more to know that the Queen hurts her feelings, and you are not a stepmother for nothing; and really, madam, the Princess Truitonne is so ugly that it would be hard to find anything uglier amongst God's creatures. The courtiers, too, do not look at all pleased to hear you speak badly of Florine.'

The Queen spent half of the night questioning him, for she could not believe that he loved Florine. And the poor Princess Florine was terrified because the four men with masks had taken her far away.

'I do not doubt that it is for the Queen's advantage that I am taken away,' said she. And she cried so much that even her enemies were touched.

The Queen in the meantime gave Prince Charming all the jewels he could wish for, and lavished her attention on him. The King presented him with a little book with gold covers and studded with diamonds, and inside it, he told him, was a photograph of his future wife.

'What!' said Prince Charming, 'the beautiful Princess Florine? Ah! she thinks of me, and in a most generous manner.'

'Seigneur,' said the King, 'you mistake; we take the part of the amiable Truitonne. I am cross, seigneur, that you do not accept this great honour; but, at the same time, a King is merely a King: he is not master enough to make the engagements that he would like.'

The Prince at last asked for Princess Florine.

'Seigneur,' said the Queen, 'her father desired that she should go away

until my daughter is married.'

'And for what reason,' said the Prince, 'should this beautiful girl be made a prisoner?'

'I ignore all that,' said the Queen.

So the Prince left the Queen's company because it was not congenial to him. When he entered his own room, he said to a young Prince who had accompanied him, and whom he loved very much, that he would give all the world to be able to speak to one of the women of the beautiful Princess for a moment. His young friend found one at once whom it would be possible to question with confidence. She told him that the same evening Florine would be at a little window that looked out on to the garden and that he could then speak to her, but that he must take every precaution, lest the Queen and King should overhear.

The Prince was delighted, and made ready to see the Princess. But the wicked maid went at once and told the Queen all that had passed. It was then arranged that Truitonne should take her place; and so, with great precautions, Truitonne placed herself at the little window.

The night was very dark; so much so that it was impossible for Prince Charming to suspect the change passed upon him. He expressed himself exactly the same to Truitonne as he had to Florine and plainly showed his love for her. Truitonne, profiting by her mother's instructions, said that she was the most unhappy person in the world to have such a wicked and cruel stepmother, and that she would have to suffer until her stepsister was married. The Prince assured her that he would marry her if she would have him, and that he would give her his heart and his crown; and he removed a ring from his finger and put it on the finger of Truitonne, as a token of his faith, and told her that she would only have to wait an hour, when a carriage would come to take her away. Truitonne begged of him to go to the Queen and ask her to give her her liberty, and assured him that, if he would come back to-morrow at the same hour, she would be ready.

The Queen was very happy at the success of her scheme. The Prince took a carriage drawn by three great frogs with great big wings, which made the

carriage simply fly. Truitonne came out mysteriously by a little door, and the Prince, who was awaiting her appearance, at once put his arms around her and swore eternal faith, but, as he was not in any humour to take a long journey in the flying carriage without marrying the Princess whom he loved, he demanded of her where they could go. She told him that she had a fairy godmother named Soussio, who was a very celebrated person, and that they would have to go to her castle.

Then the Prince, not knowing the road, begged of the frogs with the flying wings to put them on the right way; and they did so, for, mind you, frogs know all the routes of the universe. And so, in no time, they found themselves at the castle of the fairy Soussio.

Then Truitonne told the godmother that she had trapped Prince Charming and that she wanted to marry him. The godmother was not so sure that it could be done, 'for,' said she, 'he loves Princess Florine.' At all events she went to the room where the Prince was, and said to him: 'Prince Charming, here is the Princess Truitonne to whom you have given your faith; she is my godchild, and I wish that you marry her at once.'

'Me!' cried he; 'you want me to marry that little monster? You must think I am very easily pleased when you put forward such a proposition to me. She knows full well that I have never promised her anything. And if she says otherwise, she is----'

'Do not deny,' said the Fairy, 'and do not be bold and forget the respect that you owe me.'

'I respect you,' replied the Prince, 'as much as it is possible to respect a fairy. Come, now. Will you deliver me my Princess?'

'Is it that you do not know me?' said Truitonne; and she showed him his ring, adding, 'and to whom did you give this ring at the little window as a pledge of your faith, if it was not to me? Come, now, do not pretend that you have forgotten.'

'No! no! I am not going to be duped and deceived,' said the Prince. 'Come! come, my great frogs! I want to depart at once.'

'You cannot depart without my consent, said the Fairy, and she immediately touched his feet and they became glued to the floor.

'I will not,' said the Prince, 'have any other than my Princess Florine; on that I am resolved, and all you say and do will not change me one little bit.'

Soussio became sweet and used every art in her power to induce the Prince to marry Truitonne. Truitonne cried, raved, and begged; but the Prince would not say one single word to her; he only looked at her with indignant eyes and replied not a word to all her overtures.

He passed twenty days and twenty nights like this. At last the Fairy was so tired of it all that she said to the Prince, 'Very well; you are obstinate, and will not listen to reason, and will not keep your word and marry my godchild!'

The Prince, who had not spoken a word, at last replied: 'Do to me what you will, but deliver me from the dullness of this place!'

'Dullness!' cried Truitonne; 'bother you! You have done me a great injury in coming here to my country and giving me your word and then breaking it.'

'Listen to the touching words,' said the Prince in sarcasm. 'See what I have lost in refusing to take so beautiful a woman for my wife.'

'No! no!' replied Soussio, 'she shall never be that, and for your insult to her you shall fly through this window, and remain a Blue Bird for seven years. Do you hear me?--a Blue Bird for seven years.'

Immediately the Prince began to change, and his arms became covered with feathers, and he became a Blue Bird; his eyes became bright, and on his head a great white plume arose like a crown--and he flew away through the window.

In his sad mood he flew from branch to branch, warbling his song of sorrow and his love for Florine, and deploring the awful wickedness of their enemies. He thought that he was doomed for seven years, and that

Florine would be married to another.

When Truitonne returned to the Queen and told her all that had happened she flew into a terrible temper. She resolved to punish the poor Florine for having engaged the love of Prince Charming. So she dressed the Princess Truitonne in all her grandeur, and on her finger was the ring given her by the Prince; and, when Florine saw this, she knew that the ring belonged to her Prince. The Queen then announced to all that her daughter was engaged to Prince Charming, and that he loved her to distraction. Florine did not doubt the truth of it all. When she realised that she would never marry her Prince Charming, she cried all the night, and sat at the little window nursing her regrets. And, when the day arrived for the marriage, she shut the window and continued to cry.

During this time the Blue Bird, or Prince Charming, did not cease to fly round the castle. The Princess sat at the window and every night entreated that she might be delivered. 'O wicked Queen!' she cried, 'to keep me shut up like this because of Prince Charming!'

The Blue Bird heard this and did not lose a word, but waited to see who the lady was who had such a sorry plaint. But she shut the window and retired. The Blue Bird, curious to see and to hear some more, came again the following night, and again there was a maiden at the window who was full of regrets.

'Fortune!' said she, 'you have taken from me the love of my father. I have received a blow at a tender age; and it is so much pain that I am tired of living. I demand with all my heart that my fatal destiny may end.'

The Blue Bird listened, and then he knew that it was his Princess, and he said: 'Florine, a King who loves you will never love any one but you.'

'A King who loves me!' said she. 'Is this another snare of my enemies?'

'No, my Princess.' And Florine was very much afraid of this bird who spoke with as much spirit as a man. But the beauty of his plumage

reassured her.

'Would it be possible to see you, my Princess?' said he. 'Could I taste a happiness so great without dying of joy? But, alas! this great joy would be troubled by your captivity, and the wicked fairy Soussio has done this for seven years.'

'And who are you, charming bird?' said the Princess caressingly.

'You have said my name rightly, and yet you fail to recognise me,' replied the Prince.

'What! The greatest King in the world! The Prince Charming!' cried the Princess. 'Is he the little bird I see?'

'Alas! dear Florine, it is too true! And, if one thing consoles me, it is that I prefer this sorrow rather than renounce the love I have for you.'

'For me!'

And so this went on. The Blue Bird paid visits to Florine every night, and they were as happy as it was possible to be. One evening Prince Charming flew away to his palace, and brought back lovely diamond bracelets, beautiful pearl necklaces and a sweet little pearl watch, and gave them all to Florine.

The Queen could not understand how it was that Florine had such lovely jewels and why she looked so happy, so she questioned her about it. Florine, who knew that if she said the Blue Bird had given them to her, they would not believe her, and would try to drive him away, said she did not know. The Queen said the Evil One must have bought her soul, and decided to watch.

She did so, and discovered that the Blue Bird came every night. Then Truitonne and her mother sought the help of the wicked fairy Soussio; and she, to please her godchild, worked another spell on the poor Blue Bird, so that he could not come any more to see his Florine.

One day his friend the Good Fairy was passing by a certain spot where he was a prisoner in a tree, and she saw a trail of blood and heard a very weak voice calling her, but nowhere could she find the Blue Bird. But she knew it was his blood. Then, after a long time, she found him in his tiny nest, dying.

This was the Good Fairy who had given him the flying-frog carriage, so again she resolved to help him if she could. Away she went to the fairy Soussio and asked her to release the spell on Prince Charming. Soussio agreed to do so if he would marry Truitonne. Then the Good Fairy conducted Prince Charming back to his castle, where, on his arrival, the ugly Truitonne was awaiting his return, dressed in lovely clothes, and more ugly than ever.

Now the old King died, and the people, who hated the Queen and her ugly daughter, said that they would have no other Queen but Florine, and they went to her in her little room and begged her for their sake to be their Queen. But she said she had not the heart for anything because she had lost her lover, Prince Charming. They asked her again to become their Queen and then to go out and look for him, and they were sure she would find him.

So she became their Queen, and then dressed herself as a poor peasant, and went out into strange lands and travelled in many strange places, thinking to find her beloved Prince. But it was all of no avail. One day she stopped, out of sheer fatigue, to rest by a fountain, and, while she was there, the Good Fairy, disguised, came by and asked her what she was crying for. Florine told her all about the Prince whom she loved and was seeking. Then the Good Fairy told her that Prince Charming was at his own castle and that the spell had been removed, and she gave Florine four little eggs, and said that whenever she was in trouble she was to throw one of them down, and at the same time ask what she wanted, and it would be granted. With these words she disappeared.

Florine turned her face towards the castle of the Prince, and, after many trials and sufferings, she found herself at the feet of her ugly sister Truitonne. Florine, disguised as a poor peasant, was not recognised, so she offered her lovely jewels for sale, and Truitonne, who loved jewellery, resolved to buy them. But Florine would not sell

for money: all she asked was to spend a night in the castle. Truitonne was only too glad to get them at such a price, and agreed.

Feeling that the poor peasant girl was giving her something for nothing, and imagining that she did not really know the value of the jewels, Truitonne allowed her sister every liberty in the palace. She could go where she would, unquestioned, and do what she pleased.

Florine took every advantage of this, and, mixing freely among the attendants, she soon learned many things about Prince Charming. Among other pieces of news was this important item: the Prince, being unable to sleep, was in the habit of taking a sleeping-draught every night.

On hearing this she sought the Prince's head valet, and made herself so charming to him that he lost his head altogether, and was more than willing to fulfil her lightest wish.

'Tell me,' said she at last, 'why does the Prince take sleeping-draughts?'

'Ah!' replied he, looking very wise, 'it is because the Princess is so ugly.'

'Because she is so ugly? I--I don't understand.'

'What! From the very first the Prince's waking hours have been one long, frightful dream; and he can only banish it by night by taking the sleeping-draught. The Prince is deeply in love with the Princess's sister, but no one but myself knows that. Every night, when he sinks to sleep under the draught, he smiles, and his face looks so very happy, and he whispers one name again and again: "Florine! Florine!"'

The peasant girl's heart beat hard, and a plan shot like lightning through her mind. She would tell this man everything and he would help her. She knew he would, and she knew also that he would not be blind to his own advantage. Her mind was quickly made up. The four little eggs the Good Fairy had given her were packed in a little box. Taking this from the folds of her dress she took one of them and threw it on the floor.

'I _am_ Florine!' she said. 'And I want your willing help.'

The head valet stared at her in dismay. Then his face changed. He bowed to her with the utmost respect, and said: 'Princess, I am your faithful slave; command me and I will obey.'

'First, then,' said Florine, 'do not give the Prince the draught to-night; and find me an apartment next to his.'

'It shall be done,' replied the valet, and with a low bow he withdrew to make the arrangement.

'Stay!' cried Florine as he was going. 'I forbid you to tell the Prince a word of this. You understand?'

'And obey,' he replied, bowing again and again as he left her presence, walking backwards in respect to high royalty.

That night the Prince, impatient to forget the face of Truitonne, called for his sleeping-draught. The head valet appeared, bearing a flavoured mixture in a crystal goblet on a golden tray. The Prince drank it. By its taste it was the draught, but, by its effect, it was not. No sleep came to him, and the face of Truitonne grew uglier and uglier in his mind. Presently he started up.

'What sound was that?'

It came from the next apartment--the sound of a woman weeping. He listened, and in the stillness of the palace the sound came clearly. He knew that voice: it was the voice of his dear Princess Florine, just as he used to hear it when, as a Blue Bird, he spoke with her at her window.

In a moment he arose and dressed himself in his royal robes. While he was doing this, Florine in the next room took another egg from the box, and, throwing it upon the floor, cried: 'I wish that, by storm and lightning, all that is evil and ugly in this palace shall be destroyed, and all that is good and beautiful left.'

As she spoke the rising wind wailed about the palace and died away; dull thunder reverberated in the distance. The air grew stifling, and the night flowers paid their perfumes out like threatened debtors. Another rush of wind, then silence broken only by a peal of thunder nearer than before. The splash of heavy drops was heard on the flagstones of the courtyard below. The lightning was seen to flash through the windows, and the thunder shook the castle to its foundations.

Nearer and nearer loomed the storm, growing more terrific every moment. Every one was up and running about in panic. Those with ugly souls and bodies, if their consciences were also wicked, went mad in the panic, and fled in a body from the palace, thinking the end of the world had come. But those whose consciences were clear, whose hearts were true--those who could never be called ugly, no matter what they looked like--they sought the Prince and gathered round him, while the palace shuddered as all the storm gods poured out their wrath.

As the panic-stricken ones fled towards the hills, Florine looked out at the window and saw them, a rushing group with terror in their heels. There came a vivid flash of lightning, and the thunder split and rolled and crashed. When Florine looked again she saw no fugitives: they had disappeared for ever. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the storm abated. The thunder rolled away into the distance, and the moon came out and rode from cloud to cloud triumphant.

There was a knock upon the door. It was the Prince, and behind him were gathered his own, the good and true, according to her wish. How could she meet him in her peasant's garb? A quick thought came to her. She took the third egg and smashed it on the floor, saying: 'I wish that I may come face to face with my Prince in all the dazzling splendour that befits a princess.'

Instantly there was a flash as if a fairy wand had cleft the air. And there stood Florine, the most splendidly royal figure you could imagine. She was beautiful beyond words--so beautiful that the wonderful jewels in her hair and on her lovely dress, on her neck and arms and tiny shoes, could never have got their beauty from any one but her.

She opened the door, and stepped back with a cry of delight. As she did so, she placed her hand to her breast where she felt the frail little box that contained the fourth and last egg.

In another moment she was in the Prince's arms, and the pressure of that embrace crushed the box and broke the egg.

'I wish,' she cried on the instant, raising her lips to his, 'I wish that you will love me for ever!'

LES TROIS FRÈRES. by Les frères Grimm
from *Contes choisis de la famille* EBook #12250

Un vieillard avait trois fils, mais comme il ne possédait pour tout bien qu'une maison, et que cette maison lui avait été léguée par son père, il ne pouvait se résoudre à la vendre pour en partager le produit entre ses enfants. Dans cette incertitude, il lui vint une bonne idée:

--Risquez-vous par le monde, leur dit-il un jour; allez apprendre chacun un métier qui vous fasse vivre, et, votre apprentissage terminé, hâtez-vous de revenir; celui qui me donnera alors la preuve la plus convaincante de son savoir-faire, héritera de ma maison.

En conséquence, le départ des trois fils fut arrêté. Ils décidèrent qu'ils deviendraient, l'un maréchal-ferrant, l'autre barbier, et le troisième maître d'armes.

Ils fixèrent ensuite un jour et une heure où ils se retrouveraient dans la suite, pour revenir ensemble sous le toit paternel. Ces conventions arrêtées, ils partirent.

Or, il arriva que les trois frères eurent le bonheur de rencontrer chacun un maître consommé dans le métier qu'ils voulaient apprendre. C'est ainsi que notre maréchal-ferrant ne tarda pas à être chargé de ferrer les chevaux du roi; aussi pensa-t-il dans sa barbe:

--Mes frères seront bien habiles s'ils me disputent la maison.

De son côté, le jeune barbier eut bientôt pour pratiques les plus grands seigneurs de la cour, si bien qu'il se flattait aussi d'hériter de la maison à la barbe de ses frères.

Quant au maître d'armes, avant de connaître tous les secrets de son art, il dut recevoir plus d'un bon coup d'estoc et de taille; mais la récompense promise soutenait son courage, en même temps qu'il exerçait son oeil et sa main.

Quand l'époque fixée pour le retour fut arrivée, les trois frères se réunirent à l'endroit convenu, puis ils regagnèrent ensemble la maison

de leur père.

Le soir même de leur retour, tandis qu'ils étaient assis tous quatre devant la porte, ils aperçurent un lièvre qui accourait à travers champs de leur côté.

--Bravo! dit le barbier, voici une pratique qui vient fort à propos pour me fournir l'occasion de montrer mon savoir-faire!

En prononçant ces mots, notre homme prenait savon et bassin et préparait sa blanche mousse.

Quand le lièvre fut parvenu à proximité, il courut à sa poursuite, le rejoignit, et tout en galopant de concert avec le léger animal, il lui barbouilla le nez de savon, puis d'un seul coup de raseoir il lui enleva la moustache, sans lui faire la plus petite coupure, et sans oublier le plus petit poil.

--Voilà qui est travaillé! dit le père, il faudra que tes frères soient bien habiles pour te disputer la maison.

Quelques moments après, on vit arriver à toute bride un cheval fringant attelé à une légère voiture.

--Je sais vous donner un échantillon de mon adresse, dit à son tour le maréchal-ferrant.

A ces mots, il s'élança sur la trace du cheval, et bien que celui-ci redoublât de vitesse, il lui enleva les quatre fers auquel il en substitua quatre autres; et tout cela en moins d'une minute, le plus aisément du monde et sans ralentir la course du cheval.

--Tu es un artiste accompli, s'écria le père; tu es aussi sûr de ton affaire, que ton frère l'est de la sienne; et je ne saurais en vérité décider lequel de vous deux mérite le plus la maison.

--Attendez que j'aie aussi fait mes preuves, dit alors le troisième fils.

La pluie commençait à tomber en ce moment.

Notre homme tira son épée, et se mit à en décrire des cercles si rapides au-dessus de sa tête, que pas une seule goutte d'eau ne tomba sur lui; la pluie redoublant de force, ce fut bientôt comme si on la versait à seaux des hauteurs du ciel. Cependant notre maître d'armes qui s'était borné à agiter son épée toujours plus vite, demeurait à sec sous son arme, comme s'il eût été sous un parapluie ou sous un toit.

A cette vue, l'admiration de l'heureux père fut au comble, et il s'écria:

--C'est toi qui as donné la preuve d'adresse la plus étonnante; c'est à toi que revient la maison.

Les deux fils aînés approuvèrent cette décision, et joignirent leurs éloges à ceux de leur père. Ensuite, comme ils s'aimaient tous trois beaucoup, ils ne voulurent pas se séparer, et continuèrent de vivre ensemble dans la maison paternelle, où ils exercèrent chacun leur métier. Leur réputation d'habileté s'étendit au loin, et ils devinrent bientôt riches. C'est ainsi qu'ils vécurent heureux et considérés jusqu'à un âge très-avancé; et lorsqu'enfin l'aîné tomba malade et mourut, les deux autres en prirent un tel chagrin qu'ils ne tardèrent pas à le suivre.

On leur rendit les derniers devoirs. Le pasteur de la commune fit observer avec raison que trois frères qui, pendant leur vie avaient été doués d'une si grande adresse et unis par une si touchante amitié, ne devaient pas non plus être séparés dans la mort. En conséquence, on les plaça tous trois dans le même tombeau.

Excerpts from **VOYAGES AUX INDES OCCIDENTALES,**
PAR M. ANTHONY TROLLOPE [1862]

from *Le Tour du Monde; Indes Occidentales*

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La toilette des négresses. -- Avenir des mulâtres.

Le goût de la parure est, comme on sait, très-développé dans la race noire. Il n'y a rien de plus étonnant que le costume des femmes: «Il est impossible de leur refuser, dit M. Trollope, beaucoup de goût et une grande faculté d'assimilation. En Angleterre, parmi nos femmes de chambre et même nos filles des champs, la crinoline, les fleurs artificielles, les longues tailles, les manches flottantes, sont devenues communes; mais elles ne les portent pas comme si elles y étaient habituées. Elles ont généralement dans leurs habits de dimanche quelque chose d'emprunté. Chez les négresses, rien de pareil. D'abord elles ne connaissent pas la honte; ensuite, elles ont généralement de belles proportions et savent les faire valoir. Leurs costumes, les jours de fête et les dimanches, sont assurément merveilleux. Elles ne se contentent pas de calicots imprimés: il leur faut des mousselines et des soies légères, je ne sais à combien le mètre. Elles portent des robes d'une énorme ampleur. On peut voir, par un dimanche matin, trois dames occuper toute la largeur d'une rue qui, le jour précédent, frottaient de la vaisselle ou portaient des pois sur leur tête dans la ville. Cela ne les empêche pas de se promener dans leur belle toilette comme si elles n'avaient porté rien d'autre depuis l'enfance.

«Un dimanche soir, j'étais très-loin dans la campagne, à cheval, avec un planteur, qui me promenait dans sa propriété; je vis passer une jeune fille qui s'en revenait à pied de l'église. Elle était, des pieds à la tête, vêtue de blanc. Elle avait des gants et tenait un parasol ouvert. Son chapeau de paille était aussi clair, orné de dentelles blanches. Elle marchait avec une majesté digne d'un tel costume; par derrière venait sa suivante portant le livre de prières de la jeune personne sur la tête. Une négresse porte tout sur la tête, depuis la cruche remplie d'eau qui pèse cent livres jusqu'à une

bouteille de pharmacien.

«Quand nous arrivâmes près d'elle, elle se retourna et nous salua. Elle salua, car elle reconnut son maître, mais avec beaucoup de dignité, car elle avait conscience de sa belle toilette. La fille qui suivait derrière avec le livre de prières fit la révérence ordinaire, en se baissant puis se relevant plus vite que la pensée.

«Qui est cette princesse? dis-je à mon compagnon.

«--Vous voyez deux soeurs qui travaillent toutes deux à mon moulin, dit mon ami. Dimanche prochain les rôles vont changer. Polly aura le parasol et le chapeau, et Jenny portera le livre de prières derrière elle sur sa tête.»

La race mêlée est celle qui paraît à M. Trollope destinée à recueillir l'héritage de la prospérité des anciens planteurs. «Le mulâtre, bien qu'il soit sous certains aspects une détérioration du nègre, sous d'autres du blanc, l'emporte aussi sur tous deux sous certains rapports. En règle générale, il ne peut pas travailler comme fait le noir. Il ne pourrait pas rester dans les champs de canne pendant seize heures sur vingt-quatre, comme fait l'esclave de Cuba; mais il peut travailler sans danger sous un ciel tropical et faire une bonne journée. Il n'est pas sujet à la fièvre jaune comme le blanc, et il est aussi protégé par sa constitution contre les effets de la chaleur que le climat l'exige.

«Il n'y a pas encore eu, que nous sachions, de Galilée, de Shakspeare parmi les mulâtres. Il est possible même qu'il y en ait peu qui puissent se rendre un compte exact du génie de tels hommes. Mais nier que le mulâtre ait une large part de l'intelligence et de l'ambition de ses ancêtres blancs, c'est je crois une sottise et de plus une méchanceté; parce qu'une telle assertion ne peut naître que d'un injuste désir de leur fermer les portes du progrès.»

Les hommes de couleur se rattachent par toutes les nuances possibles, d'une part au noir, de l'autre au blanc; les neuf dixièmes ne peuvent pas cacher leur origine, mais il y a une petite fraction qu'un oeil exercé seul peut distinguer de la race blanche: malheureusement la

jalousie des planteurs et les préjugés maintiennent des barrières qui survivent aux lois qui consacraient jadis l'inégalité des races.

L'avenir appartient pourtant aux hommes de couleur; on en compte plus de soixante-dix mille tandis qu'il n'y a que quinze mille blancs, et si l'émancipation peut attirer encore dans les Indes occidentales des coolies ou des Chinois, elle n'y attire plus d'Européens. L'homme blanc a passé là, il y a laissé sa trace: il a maintenant d'autres provinces à conquérir.

«Heureusement, dit M. Trollope, les hommes de couleur sont capables des travaux les plus élevés comme les plus humbles. Ils y réussissent au grand dépit de la classe qui s'estime supérieure. Ils gagnent de l'argent et savent en jouir. Ils savent être hommes d'État, avocats, médecins. Qu'un étranger se promène dans les boutiques de Kingston, et il verra combien d'entre elles appartiennent à des hommes de couleur; qu'il aille au parlement, et il verra quel rôle ils jouent dans les débats.»

Pour les blancs la Jamaïque n'est plus ce pays de Cocagne où l'on accumulait jadis, grâce au travail servile, des richesses colossales en peu d'années: ni ducs, ni comtes ne viennent plus gouverner l'île avec grand appareil. Le gouvernement n'en est guère plus recherché que celui de la Nouvelle-Zélande ou de la Colombie anglaise: la main d'oeuvre fait défaut aux planteurs; il y a trop de montagnes, de pays pastoral dans l'île, pour que les trois cent mille noirs qui s'y trouvent aujourd'hui soient forcés de venir demander du travail dans les champs de canne. Disons ensuite que la compétition de Cuba, du Brésil, de Porto-Rico, des États-Unis, où l'esclavage existe encore et prend chaque jour plus d'extension, est désastreuse pour la Jamaïque. Une récolte abondante à Cuba peut, dans certaines années, abaisser le prix du sucre à un taux ruineux pour le planteur de la colonie anglaise. L'abolition de l'esclavage aux États-Unis suffirait pour rendre aux Indes occidentales leur ancienne splendeur.

Les petites Antilles. -- La Martinique. -- La Guadeloupe. -- Grenada.

Quittons les grandes Antilles sans nous arrêter à Cuba où nous reviendrons un jour, et entrons dans les petites Antilles dont l'archipel s'étend en ligne recourbée depuis Porto-Rico jusqu'à la Guyane anglaise, à l'embouchure de l'Orénoque. Passons rapidement devant Saint-Thomas, Saint-Christophe, communément nommé Saint-Kitts et Nevis, petites colonies prospères qui exportent chaque année plus de sucre: de Nevis à Antigua on aperçoit l'îlot de Montserrat (voy. t. I, p. 177). Antigua a un excellent port, nommé English Harbour, qui autrefois servait de station navale. De là on arrive à la Guadeloupe, et, après avoir longé la Dominique, à la Martinique, qui est aussi française.

«Nous retrouvons dans ces îles, dit M. Trollope, les riches et sauvages beautés des admirables îles de la mer des Caraïbes. Les montagnes groupées dans les deux colonies françaises sont très-belles, et les collines sont couvertes jusqu'à leur sommet de la plus admirable végétation. Dans chacune de ces îles on est frappé par la grande supériorité des villes principales sur celles des colonies qui nous appartiennent: celle de la Guadeloupe se nomme Basse-Terre et la capitale de la Martinique est Saint-Pierre. Ces villes offrent un contraste avec Roseau et Port-Castries, les localités les plus importantes des deux îles adjacentes anglaises de la Dominique et de Sainte-Lucie. On débarque dans les ports français sur d'excellentes jetées, par des escaliers commodes. Les quais sont ombragés par des arbres, les rues propres et en bon état: les boutiques montrent que le commerce est prospère. Des conduits amènent de l'eau courante dans la ville. Les colons français, créoles ou Européens, considèrent les Indes occidentales comme leur pays. Ils ne tournent pas sans cesse un oeil de regret sur la France. Ils se marient, ils travaillent, ils bâtissent pour la colonie et pour la colonie seulement. Chez nous il en est autrement. On considère nos colonies des Indes comme un logis temporaire qu'il faut désertir dès qu'on a gagné assez d'argent en faisant du sucre et de la mélasse.»

La Dominique et Sainte-Lucie exportent chacune annuellement six mille tonnes environ de sucre, la Martinique jusqu'à soixante mille.

C'est depuis 1814 que la Martinique et la Guadeloupe, avec l'îlot insignifiant de Marie-Galante, ont été politiquement séparées de la Dominique et de Sainte-Lucie, bien que ces deux îles soient toutes françaises par le langage, les moeurs, la religion et même en partie par les lois.

Au delà de ce groupe intéressant, nous rencontrons Barbados qui est comme la sentinelle avancée de la chaîne des petites Antilles: Barbados, île tout anglaise, fière de sa richesse; puis Saint-Vincent qui jadis a, pendant quelque temps, appartenu à la France; on côtoie ensuite le petit archipel des Grenadines jusqu'à Grenada, le quartier général des fruits de la terre, comme l'appelle M. Trollope, où l'on mange les meilleurs ananas, oranges et mangos des Antilles. La capitale, Saint-George, est une ville bien bâtie: encore importante, bien que Grenada soit aujourd'hui bien déchue de son ancien rang. Nous arrivons enfin à la Guyane anglaise.

AT THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

by Helen Davenport Gibbons, from *Paris Vistas* EBook #40292

There are many libraries in Paris. Some of them are so famous that I ought to hesitate to call the Bibliothèque Nationale simply "the library." But I do call it that, not because it is the largest in the world (a fact that calls forth instinctively admiration and respect from Americans), but because we love the Bibliothèque from long and habitual association. It is a part of our life like our home.

In the beginning of the fellowship year, Herbert came to realize that books could do more for him than lecturers. A magnetic and enthusiastic lecturer communicates his inspiration: but most professors are decidedly non-conductors. And then, with rare exceptions, university professors are not sources themselves. What they do is to stand between you and the sources. When they have something original and suggestive to say, why not let them speak to you from the covers of a book? If a book does not hold you, you can throw it aside and take up another: the lecturer has you fast for an hour, and you often suffer because his baby did not sleep well the night before. But when the professor speaks from the printed page, he has had a chance to eliminate in his final revision whatever effects of insomnia there may have been in the first draft. If he hasn't done so, you do not need to read him.

When students become full fledged post-graduates, they are at the parting of the ways. Either they go directly to the sources, form independent judgments, and produce original work as a result of constructive thinking, or they continue to remain in intellectual dependence upon their teachers. The latter alternative is the more pleasant course. It requires less effort, and does not make one restless and unhappy. The pleasant days of taking in are prolonged and the agonizing days of giving out are postponed. But if a youngster is face to face with books all day long every day, he either stops studying or commences to produce for himself. Then, too, he is constantly under the salutary influence of being confronted with his own appalling ignorance. Whatever effort he makes, the volumes he summons from the shelves to his desk keep reminding him that others have given years to what he hopes to compass in days. The Bibliothèque teaches two lessons, and teaches them with every tick of the clock from nine a. m. to four p. m.--humility and

industry.

There was, of course, much to be learned at the Sorbonne. But my husband had already passed through three years of post-graduate work, and was tired of chasing around from one lecture to another. There were hours between courses that could not be utilized, and the habit of loafing is the easiest formed in the world. It was because we were jealous of every hour in the Golden Year that Herbert and I first turned from the Sorbonne to the Bibliothèque. Later we came to realize that the only thing in common between Salles de Conférences of the Sorbonne and the Salle de Lecture of the Bibliothèque was the lack of fresh air--the universal and unavoidable torture of indoors everywhere in France.

Nine to four, five days in the week, Herbert lived in the Bibliothèque, and I went there mornings--when Scappie was not on my conscience! One did not have to go out to lunch, as the fare of the _buvette_ was quite acceptable to those interested in books and manuscripts. The old law of the time of Louis XIV holds good in this day. No light but that of heaven has ever been introduced into the Bibliothèque. After gas was discovered, the law was not changed. Even when electricity came, presenting an infinitesimal risk of fire, the Government refused to have the vast building wired. The prohibition of lights extends, of course, to smoking. You cannot strike a match in the sacred precincts. So, after lunch we used to go across the street and sit for half an hour in the Square Louvois.

Do you know the Square Louvois? I'll wager you do not. For when one passes afoot up the Rue Richelieu, he is generally in a hurry to get to the Bourse or the Grands Boulevards. If you go on the Clichy-Odéon bus, you whizz by one of the most delightful little green spots in the city of green spots without noticing it. The Square Louvois has on the side opposite the Bibliothèque Nationale a good-sized hotel, which was named after the square. The boundary streets on the north and south are lined with modest restaurants and coffee bars, within the purse of _petits commis_ and _midgettes_. In Europe there is not the hurry over the mid-day meal that seems universal in America. Dyspepsia is unknown. The humblest employee or laborer has from one hour and a half to two hours off at noon. There is competition for benches and chairs in the Square Louvois between twelve-thirty and two. Mothers who are their own

nursemaids have to resist the temporary encroachment of the Quarter's business world. We from the Bibliothèque make an additional demand. We must have our smoke and fresh air. And we never tire of the noble monument to the rivers of France that is the fountain in the center of the Square.

"Funny, isn't it," said I, "how things turn out to be different from what you expected--your thesis for instance. Gallicanism is simply a closed door for the present."

"I tackled too big a subject," admitted Herbert.

We were smoking in the Square after lunching in the buffet of the Bibliothèque Nationale with the Scholar from Oxford.

"I'll wager," said Herbert, "that those greasy fellows in the _salle de travail_ discovered long ago what I have just learned. You start with a general subject and a century. You narrow down until you have a phase and a decade. If I ever do Gallicanism, it'll be limited to the influence of the conversion of Henry of Navarre upon the movement. I could work till my hair was grey developing that. But I should be narrow-minded and dry as bones when I finished."

"Ah! You must not quarrel with the greasy fellows," put in the Scholar from Oxford. "That is research. They are not narrow: they are specialists." The Scholar is a canny Scotchman who gives his r's their full value, and then some.

Allowing the letter r to be heard for sure is another point of contact and sympathy between Scott and Frank. Just as the cooler Teutonic temperament seeks the sun, and has been seeking the sun right down through history, in trying to reach the Mediterranean, the cooler Scotch temperament seeks the sun where it is nearest to be found--in France. It is the attraction of opposites.

"You Americans," said the Scholar, "with your Rocky Mountains and your Niagaras naturally approach research from the general to the particular. It is far easier for men born in an older civilization to begin with a specialist's point of view."

"I know, I know," said Herbert, "I had to work that out and I had to change my whole subject, too. I wobbled from Gallicanism to Ottoman history."

"That's no sin," declared Alick. "A man engrossed in research is human. Going to Turkey was bound to influence your thinking. The traditions of France still hold you, but the memory of Turkey is strong enough to change the trend of your work. Go on with your origins of the Ottoman Empire and be thankful you have discovered a line off the beaten track."

"Yes," I cried, "and for goodness' sake stick to constructive ideas. You research-fiends waste too much time trying to prove that the other fellow is wrong. Instead of remaining scientists you get to be quibblers. But I must leave you now. I cannot put my whole day into the Bibliothèque. I have to mix up tea-kettles and dusting with pamphlets and cards for the file."

As Herbert and the Scholar from Oxford passed by the solemn guard at the door of the salle de travail, I lingered in the lobby musing about what we had been saying. I leaned for a minute against the pedestal of the Sèvres vase and watched Herbert and Alick take their places side by side at the old inked desks. I looked through the great polished plate glass that makes the salle de travail and the travailleurs seem like a picture in its frame. I knew from experience that once the two men had got their noses in their books they would not look up. There was no use in waiting for a smile.

"Boc ou demi?" asked the waiter.

Herbert and I and the Scholar from Oxford were lunching together in the Quarter. The Bibliothèque was closed for cleaning, so it was an off day.

Herbert and the Scholar asked for bocs, and I thinking to be modest chose a demi. My eyes nearly dropped out of my head when the men got glasses of beer and before me stood a formidable mug that held a pint. Emilie told me afterwards that if I wanted that much beer again the waiter would understand better if I ordered "un sérieux."

The Scholar from Oxford had the habit of living in our apartment when he came to Paris. Memories of hospitality on the part of himself and his wife when we were on our honeymoon in Oxford were fresh, and when the time came for the Scholar's next look at manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, there was no question in our mind--nor in his, for that matter--as to where he should stay. We set up a folding-bed in the dining-room and tucked him in. No matter if we did not come back to the Rue Servandoni at meal time. If we did not want to bother getting up a meal, we put the apartment key into our pocket and sallied forth on what we called a baby-carriage promenade. There was always some little place where we could eat when we got hungry. Once we dined in a _crémier chaude_ for no better reason than the attraction of a diverting sign on the window--_Five o'clock à toute heure_.

To-day we had decided against Brogart's, our usual haunt, on the rue de Rivoli. At Brogart's you could lunch for Fr. 1.25 with the _plat du jour_ and a satisfying range of choice in the fixings that went with it. It was 1.20 if you invested in tickets. Then you were given a napkin-ring to mark your serviette, and a numbered hole in the open-face cupboard screwed to the wall beside the high desk where Madame sat while she raked in the money and kept a sharp eye on her clients. There was a division of opinion between Mother and me during a flying visit she made us just before Christmas. We took her to Brogart's. She saw a fellow, some kind of a wop with a greasy face and long hair, pick his teeth with a fork. She never went back to Brogart's again. They don't do that in Philadelphia. At least if they do, Mother had never happened to see them. Herbert and Alick and I were less difficult to please. To-day it was only because we had wandered far afield that Brogart's did not see us. We had found a table that pleased us in a restaurant that bore the sign "Au rendez-vous des cochers." We were not looking for a novel experience. We were not tourists, you understand. It was on account of the budget.

Everybody knows that the cochers of Paris are no fools. They can drive a horse, but they can drive a bargain too and afterwards settle down on their high box and fling you shrewd observations about art or politics or what not. But there is more to it than that. When you have lived a while in the Latin quarter you know who are the expert judges of cooking. In the old days, the meal you could buy in a tiny dark

rendez-vous des cochers was as tasty as anything you could enjoy on a Grand Boulevard at ten times the price. Minor details like a table-cloth and clean forks and knives with each new plate are not missed when the _gigot_ is done to a turn and the _sauce piquante_ is just right. The _rendez-vous des cochers_ restaurant has one distinct advantage over the swell place on the Boulevards. If you are in a hurry to go to the Concert Rouge and have had no dinner, you can stop for a second at a cab driver's restaurant while you buy a portion of _frites_. The luscious golden potatoes, sprinkled with salt, are wrapped in a paper, and you consume them as you walk up the Rue de Tournon. They don't mind babies there. Scruppie was asleep in her carriage. Monsier le Patron came out and rolled the carriage ever so gently under the awning beside the glass screen by the restaurant door. He beamed at us benevolently, then stepped over to explain that he was a _père de famille_ and that _courants d'air_ inflame babies' eyes.

The Scholar from Oxford is a Scotchman with the Scotch affection for France. Before the war he came to France and Italy every year to make enigmatical notes in his own handwriting reduced to cramped proportions. The notes were placed within columns that were inked out years ago when he began the monumental work. The columns are drawn across the short dimension of the paper, so that you have to turn the thing sidewise to read it.

There is a variety of ink. The row of notes at the top is all in the same color. Three quarters of an inch in black mark the first year's hours spent in the Bibliothèque. Run your eye down a space the width of your thumb and the ink changes. Count how many ink colors you see, and you'll know how many times the Scholar from Oxford has come abroad on his grant. He carries his papers in a shiny black oil cloth _serviette_. He was modestly imperturbable when with my usual vehemence I gave him a good scolding because he confessed he had no copy of the precious sheets.

"So worked the old monks in the days of the Reformation," said I, "when a fellow spent his life time laboriously copying the Bible with his own hand."

"Ah," mused the Scotchman with his eyes far away, "they were great

scholars, the monks."

"But it was slow," I protested, "often a man did not live long enough to illuminate the device at the end of his chapter. Only a great enthusiasm carried his successors to the end."

"Without them, think what we should have lost!"

"But they worked like that, you stubborn one, because there were no typewriters or secretaries. You cannot persuade me, Alick, that there is any extra virtue in using their methods today. You should adopt modern methods so that you could accomplish more. You don't seem to realize that thirty years from now the world will call you what you are, Britain's greatest Latin scholar."

Unconvinced that mediaeval methods belong to mediaeval times, the Scholar from Oxford lit another cigarette. He still persists in carrying around Europe, in spite of wars, his priceless record of years of labor. But he has since become Professor of Humanity at a great University. The chair that he holds dates back to the day of the methods to which he remains faithful.

Home again, I was making the coffee. But I was not out of the conversation. Our kitchenette was six feet from the dining-room table. Herbert started to light his cigar.

"Ah, my lad," said the Scholar from Oxford, staying Herbert's hand, "you haven't asked the lady's permission!"

"I guess I can smoke in my dining-room," answered Herbert.

"You have to ask my permission then," laughed Alick, "before you smoke in my bedroom."

Thank heaven, the Bibliothèque Nationale does not make my husband and my guest stupid. If I could not look forward to jolly evenings, I should make war upon research work, much as I like Bibliothèque Nationale.

WOMAN IN POLITICS, by Hugo Paul Thieme
from *Women of Modern France* EBook #32727

French women of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, when studied according to the distinctive phases of their influence, are best divided into three classes: those queens who, as wives, represented virtue, education, and family life; the mistresses, who were instigators of political intrigue, immorality, and vice; and the authoresses and other educated women, who constituted themselves the patronesses of art and literature.

This division is not absolute by any means; for we see that in the sixteenth century the regent-mother (for example, Louise of Savoy and Catherine de' Medici), in extent of influence, fills the same position as does the mistress in the eighteenth century; though in the former period appears, in Diana of Poitiers, the first of a long line of ruling mistresses.

Queen-consorts, in the sixteenth as in the following centuries, exercised but little influence; they were, as a rule, gentle and obedient wives--even Catherine, domineering as she afterward showed herself to be, betraying no signs of that trait until she became regent.

The literary women and women of spirit and wit furthered all intellectual and social development; but it was the mistresses--those great women of political schemes and moral degeneracy--who were vested with the actual importance, and it must in justice to them be said that they not infrequently encouraged art, letters, and mental expansion.

Eight queens of France there were during the sixteenth century, and three of these may be accepted as types of purity, piety, and goodness: Claude, first wife of Francis I.; Elizabeth of France, wife of Charles IX.; and Louise de Vaudemont, wife of Henry III. These queens, held up to ridicule and scorn by the depraved followers of their husbands' mistresses, were revered by the people; we find striking contrasts to them in the two queens-regent, Louise of Savoy and Catherine de' Medici, who, in the period of their power, were

as unscrupulous and brutal, intriguing and licentious, jealous and revengeful, as the most wanton mistresses who ever controlled a king. In this century, we find two other remarkable types: Marguerite d'Angoulême, the bright star of her time; and her whose name comes instantly to mind when we speak of the Lady of Angoulême--Marguerite de Navarre, representing both the good and the doubtful, the broadest sense of that untranslatable term _femme d'esprit_.

The first of the royal French women to whom modern woman owes a great and clearly defined debt was Anne of Brittany, wife of Louis XII. and the personification of all that is good and virtuous. To her belongs the honor of having taken the first step toward the social emancipation of French women; she was the first to give to woman an important place at court. This precedent she established by requesting her state officials and the foreign ambassadors to bring their wives and daughters when they paid their respects to her. To the ladies themselves, she sent a "royal command," bidding them leave their gloomy feudal abodes and repair to the court of their sovereign.

Anne may be said to belong to the transition period--that period in which the condition of slavery and obscurity which fettered the women of the Middle Ages gave place to almost untrammelled liberty. The queen held a separate court in great state, at Blois and Des Tournelles, and here elegance, even magnificence, of dress was required of her ladies. At first, this unprecedented demand caused discontent among men, who at that time far surpassed women in elaborateness of costume and had, consequently, been accustomed to the use of their surplus wealth for their own purposes. Under Anne's influence, court life underwent a complete transformation; her receptions, which were characterized by royal splendor, became the centre of attraction.

Anne of Brittany, the last queen of France of the Middle Ages and the first of the modern period, was a model of virtuous conduct, conjugal fidelity, and charity. Having complete control over her own immense wealth, she used it largely for beneficent purposes; to her encouragement much of the progress of art and literature in France was due. Hers was an example that many of the later queens endeavored to follow, but it cannot be said that they ever exerted a like influence

or exhibited an equal power of initiation and self-assertion.

The first royal woman to become a power in politics in the period that we are considering was Louise of Savoy, mother of Francis I., a type of the voluptuous and licentious female of the sixteenth century. Her pernicious activity first manifested itself when, having conceived a violent passion for Charles of Bourbon, she set her heart upon marrying him, and commenced intrigues and plots which were all the more dangerous because of her almost absolute control over her son, the King.

At this time there were three distinct sets or social castes at the court of France: the pious and virtuous band about the good Queen Claude; the lettered and elegant belles in the coterie of Marguerite d'Angoulême, sister of Francis I.; and the wanton and libertine young maids who formed a galaxy of youth and beauty about Louise of Savoy, and were by her used to fascinate her son and thus distract him from affairs of state.

Louise used all means to bring before the king beautiful women through whom she planned to preserve her influence over him. One of these frail beauties, Françoise de Foix, completely won the heart of the monarch; her ascendancy over him continued for a long period, in spite of the machinations of Louise, who, when Francis escaped her control, sought to bring disrepute and discredit upon the fair mistress.

The mother, however, remained the powerful factor in politics. With an abnormal desire to hoard money, an unbridled temper, and a violent and domineering disposition, she became the most powerful and dangerous, as well as the most feared, woman of all France. During her regency the state coffers were pillaged, and plundering was carried on on all sides. One of her acts at this time was to cause the recall of Charles of Bourbon, then Governor of Milan; this measure was taken as much for the purpose of obtaining revenge for his scornful rejection of her offer of marriage as for the hope of eventually bringing him to her side.

Upon the return of Charles, she immediately began plotting against him, including in her hatred Françoise de Foix, the king's mistress,

at whom Bourbon frequently cast looks of pity which the furiously jealous Louise interpreted as glances of love. As a matter of fact, Bourbon, being strictly virtuous, was out of reach of temptation by the beauties of the court, and there were no grounds for jealousy.

This love of Louise for Charles of Bourbon is said to have owed most of its ardor to her hope of coming into possession of his immense estates. She schemed to have his title to them disputed, hoping that, by a decree of Parliament, they might be taken from him; the idea in this procedure was that Bourbon, deprived of his possessions, must come to her terms, and she would thus satisfy--at one and the same time--her passion and her cupidity.

Under her influence the character of the court changed entirely; retaining only a semblance of its former decency, it became utterly corrupt. It possessed external elegance and distingué manners, but below this veneer lay intrigue, debauchery, and gross immorality. In order to meet the vast expenditures of the king and the queen-mother, the taxes were enormously increased; the people, weighed down by the unjust assessment and by want, began to clamor and protest. Undismayed by famine, poverty, and epidemic, Louise continued her depredations on the public treasury, encouraging the king in his squanderings; and both mother and son, in order to procure money, begged, borrowed, plundered.

Louise was always surrounded by a bevy of young ladies, selected beauties of the court, whose natural charms were greatly enhanced by the lavishness of their attire. Always ready to further the plans of their mistress, they hesitated not to sacrifice reputation or honor to gratify her smallest whim. Her power was so generally recognized that foreign ambassadors, in the absence of the king, called her "that other king." When war against France broke out between Spain and England, Louise succeeded in gaining the office of constable for the Duc d'Alençon; by this means, she intended to displace Charles of Bourbon (whom she was still persecuting because he continued cold to her advances), and to humiliate him in the presence of his army; the latter design, however, was thwarted, as he did not complain.

To the caprice of Louise of Savoy were due the disasters and defeats

of the French army during the period of her power; by frequently displacing someone whose actions did not coincide with her plans, and elevating some favorite who had avowed his willingness to serve her, she kept military affairs in a state of confusion.

Many wanton acts are attributed to her: she appropriated forty thousand crowns allowed to Governor Lautrec of Milan for the payment of his soldiers, and caused the execution of Samblancay, superintendent of finances, who had been so unfortunate as to incur her displeasure. It was Charles of Bourbon, who, with Marshal Lautrec, investigated the episode of the forty thousand crowns and exposed the treachery and perfidy of the mother of his king.

Finding that Bourbon intended to persist in his resistance to her advances, Louise decided upon drastic measures of retaliation. With the assistance of her chancellor (and tool), Duprat, she succeeded in having withheld the salaries which were due to Bourbon because of the offices held by him. As he took no notice of these deprivations, she next proceeded to divest him of his estates by laying claim to them for herself; she then proposed to Bourbon that, by accepting her hand in marriage, he might settle the matter happily. The object of her numerous schemes not only rejected this offer with contempt, but added insult to injury by remarking: "I will never marry a woman devoid of modesty." At this rebuff, Louise was incensed beyond measure, and when Queen Claude suggested Bourbon's marriage to her sister, Mme. Renée de France (a union to which Charles would have consented gladly), the queen-mother managed to induce Francis I. to refuse his consent.

After the death of Anne of Beaujeu, mother-in-law of Charles of Bourbon, her estates were seized by the king and transferred to Louise while the claim was under consideration by Parliament. When the judges, after an examination of the records of the Bourbon estate, remonstrated with Chancellor Duprat against the illegal transfer, he had them put into prison. This rigorous act, which was by order of Louise, weakened the courage of the court; when the time arrived for a final decision, the judges declared themselves incompetent to decide, and in order to rid themselves of responsibility referred the matter to the king's council. This great lawsuit, which was continued for a long time, eventually forced Charles of Bourbon to flee from France.

Having sworn allegiance to Charles V. of Spain and Henry VIII. of England against Francis I., he was made lieutenant-general of the imperial armies.

When Francis, captured at the battle of Pavia, was taken to Spain, Louise, as regent, displayed unusual diplomatic skill by leaguering the Pope and the Italian states with Francis against the Spanish king. When, after nearly a year's captivity, her son returned, she welcomed him with a bevy of beauties; among them was a new mistress, designed to destroy the influence of the woman who had so often thwarted the plans of Louise--the beautiful Françoise de Foix whom the king had made Countess of Châteaubriant.

This new beauty was Anne de Pisseleu, one of the thirty children of Seigneur d'Heilly, a girl of eighteen, with an exceptional education. Most cunning was the trap which Louise had set for the king. Anne was surrounded by a circle of youthful courtiers, who hung upon her words, laughed at her caprices, courted her smiles; and when she rather confounded them with the extent of the learning which--with a sort of gay triumph--she was rather fond of showing, they pronounced her "the most charming of learned ladies and the most learned of the charming."

The plot worked; Francis was fascinated, falling an easy prey to the wiles of the wanton Anne. The former mistress, Françoise de Foix, was discarded, and Louise, purely out of revenge and spite, demanded the return of the costly jewels given by the king and appropriated them herself.

The duty assigned to the new mistress was that of keeping Francis busy with fêtes and other amusements. While he was thus kept under the spell of his enchantress, he lost all thought of his subjects and the welfare of his country and the affairs of the kingdom fell into the hands of Louise and her chancellor, Duprat. The girl-mistress, Anne, was married by Louise to the Duc d'Etampes whose consent was gained through the promise of the return of his family possessions which, upon his father's departure with Charles of Bourbon, had been confiscated.

The reign of Louise of Savoy was now about over; she had accomplished

everything she had planned. She had caused Charles of Bourbon, one of the greatest men of the sixteenth century, to turn against his king; and that king owed to her--his mother--his defeat at Pavia, his captivity in Spain, and his moral fall. Spain, Italy, and France were victims of the infamous plotting and disastrous intrigues of this one woman whose death, in 1531, was a blessing to the country which she had dishonored.

At the time of the marriage of Francis I. to Eleanor of Portugal (one of the last acts of Louise), Europe was beginning to look upon France as ahead of all other nations in the "superlativeness of her politeness." The most rigid etiquette and the most punctilious politeness were always observed, fines being imposed for any discourtesy toward women.

After the death of Louise, the lot of managing the king and directing his policy fell to the share of his mistress, the Duchesse d'Etampes, who at once became all-powerful at court; her influence over him was like that of the drug which, to the weak person who begins its use, soon becomes an absolute necessity.

After the death of the dauphin, all the court flatteries were directed toward Henry, the eldest son of Francis. Though his mistress, Diana of Poitiers, ruled him, she exercised no influence politically; that she was not lacking in diplomacy, however, was proved by her attitude toward Henry's wife, Catherine, whom she treated with every indication of friendship and esteem, in marked contrast to the disdain exhibited by other ladies of the court. These two women became friends, working together against the mistress of the king--the Duchesse d'Etampes--and causing, by their intrigues, dissensions between father and son.

The duchess was not a bad woman; her dissuasion of Francis I. from undertaking war with Solyman II. against Charles V. is one instance of the use of her influence in the right direction. By some historians, she is accused of having played the traitress, in the interest of Emperor Charles V., during the war of Spain and England against France. It was she who urged the Treaty of Cr py with Charles V.; by it, through the marriage of the French king's second son, the Duke of Orleans, to the niece of Charles V., the duchess was sure of a safe

retreat when her bitter enemy, Henry's mistress, should reign after the king's death. Her plans, however, did not materialize, as the duke died and the treaty was annulled.

The death of Francis I. occurred in 1547; with his reign ends the first period of woman's activity--a period influenced mainly by Louise of Savoy, whose relations to France were as disastrous as were those of any mistress. The influence exerted by her may in some respects be compared with that of Mme. de Pompadour; though, were the merits and demerits of both carefully tested, the results would hardly be in favor of Louise. Strong in diplomacy and intrigue, she was unscrupulous and wanton--morally corrupt; she did nothing to further the development of literature and art; if she favored men of genius it was merely from motives of self-interest.

With the accession of Henry II. his mistress entered into possession of full power. The absolute sway of Diana of Poitiers over this weakest of French kings was due to her strong mind, great ability, wide experience, fascination of manner, and to that exceptional beauty which she preserved to her old age. Immediately upon coming into power, she dispatched the Duchesse d'Etampes to one of her estates and at the same time forced her to restore the jewels which she had received from Francis I., a usual procedure with a mistress who knew herself to be first in authority.

After being thus displaced, the duchess spent her time in doing charitable work, and is said to have afforded protection to the Protestants. Eventually, hers was the fate of almost all the mistresses. Compelled to give up many of her possessions, miserable and forgotten by all, her last days were most unhappy.

Early in her career, Henry made Diana Duchesse de Valentinois. So powerful did she become that Sieur de Bayard, secretary of state, having referred in jest to her age (she was twenty years the king's senior), was deprived of his office, thrown into prison, and left to die. In her management of Queen Catherine, Diana was most politic; she never interfered, but constituted herself "the protectress of the legitimate wife, settling all questions concerning the newly born," for which she received a large salary. When, while the king was in

Italy, the queen became ill, she owed her recovery to the watchful care of the mistress. The latter appointed to the vacant estates and positions members of her house--that of Guise. In time, this house gained such an ascendancy that it conceived the project of setting aside all the princes of the blood royal.

Having (through one of her favorites) gained control of the royal treasury, Diana appropriated everything--lands, money, jewels. Her influence was so astonishing to the people that she was accused of wielding a magic power and bewitching the king who seemed, verily, to be leading an enchanted existence; he had but one thought, one aim--that of pleasing and obeying his aged mistress. To make amends for his adultery, he concluded to extirpate heretics. Such a combination of luxury and extravagance with licentiousness and brutality, such wholesale murder, persecution, and burning at the stake have never been equalled, except under Nero.

Michelet reveals the character of Diana in these words: "Affected by nothing, loving nothing, sympathizing with nothing; of the passions retaining only those which will give a little rapidity to the blood; of the pleasures preferring those that are mild and without violence--the love of gain and the pursuit of money; hence, there was absence of soul. Another phase was the cultivation of the body, the body and its beauty uniquely cared for by virile treatment and a rigid régime which is the guardian of life--not weakly adored as by women who kill themselves by excessive self-love." M. Saint-Amand continues, after quoting the above: "At all seasons of the year, Diana plunges into a cold bath on rising. As soon as day breaks, she mounts a horse, and, followed by swift hounds, rides through dewy verdure to her royal lover to whom--fascinated by her mythological pomp--she seems no more a woman but a goddess. Thus he styles her in verses of burning tenderness:

"Hélas, mon Dieu! combien je regrette
Le temps que j'ai perdu en ma jeunesse!
Combien de fois je me suis souhaité
Avoir Diane pour ma seule maîtresse.
Mais je craignais qu'elle, qui est déesse,
Ne se voulût abaisser jusque là."

[Alas, my God! how much I regret the time lost in my youth! How often have I longed to have Diana for my only mistress! But I feared that she who is a goddess would not stoop so low as that.]

Catherine remained quietly in the palace, preferring her position, unpleasant as it was, to the persecution and possible incarceration in a convent which would result from any interference on her part between the king and his mistress. Without power or privileges, she was a mere figurehead--a good mother looking after her family. However, she was not idle; without taking part in the intrigues, she was studying them--planning her future tactics; in all relations she was diplomatic, her conversation ever displaying exquisite tact.

While France groaned under the burdens of seemingly interminable wars and exorbitant taxes, her king revelled in excessive luxury; the aim of his favorite mistress seemed to be to acquire wealth and spend it lavishly for her own pleasure. Voluptuousness, cruelty, and extravagance were the keynotes of the time. All means were used to procure revenues, the king easing any pangs of conscience by burning a few heretics whose estates were then quickly confiscated.

Diana, even at the age of sixty, still held Henry in her toils; an easy prey for the wiles of the flatterer, he was kept in ignorance of the hatred and anger heaping up against him. In the midst of riotous festivity, Henry II. died, a victim of the lance of Montgomery; and the twelve years' reign of debauchery, cruelty, and shameless extravagance came to an end.

Whatever else may be said of Diana, she proved to be a liberal patroness of art and letters; this was possible for her, since, in addition to inherited wealth and the gifts of lands and jewels from the king, she procured the possessions of many heretics whose confiscated wealth was assigned to her as a faithful servant and supporter of the church.

Her hotel at Anet was one of the most elaborate, tasteful, and elegant in all France; there the finest specimens of Italian sculpture, painting, and woodwork were to be seen. The king, upon making her

a duchess, presented her with the beautiful château of Chenonceaux, which was so much coveted by Catherine. The latter attempted to make Diana pay for the château, thus interrupting her plans for building; upon discovering this, Henry sent his own artists and workmen to carry out Diana's desires. Such was the power of his mistress over the weak king that he respected her wishes far more than he did those of his queen. This was one of those instances in which Catherine saw fit to remain silent and plan revenge.

The death of Diana of Poitiers was that common to all women of her position. She died in 1566, forgotten by the world--her world. In her will she made "provision for religious houses, to be opened to women of evil lives, as if, in the depth of her conscience, she had recognized the likeness between their destiny and her own." Like the former mistresses, she had been required to give up the jewels received from Henry II.; but as this order was from Francis II. instead of from his mistress, the gems were returned to the crown after having passed successively through the hands of three mistresses.

Catherine's time had not yet come, for she dared not interfere when Mary Stuart (a beautiful, inexperienced, and impetuous girl of seventeen) gained ascendancy over Francis II.--a mere boy. The house of Guise was then supreme and began its bloody campaign against its enemies; fortunately, however, its power was short-lived, for in 1560 the king died after reigning only seventeen months. At this point, Catherine enters upon the scene of action. Jealous of Mary Stuart and fearing that the young king, Charles IX., then but ten years old, might become infatuated with her and marry her, she promptly returned the fair young woman to Scotland.

The task before the regent was no light one; her kingdom was divided against itself, the country was overburdened with taxes, and discontent reigned universally. All who surrounded her were full of prejudice and actuated solely by personal aspirations--she realized that she could trust no one.

Her first act of a political nature was to rescue the house of Valois and solidify the royal authority. Some critics maintain that

she began her reign with moderation, gentleness, impartiality, and reconciliation. This view finds support in the fact that during the first years she favored Protestantism; finding, however, that the latter was weakening royal power and that the country at large was opposed to it, she became its most bitter enemy. To the Protestants and their plottings she attributed all the disastrous effects of the civil war, all thefts, murders, incests, and adulteries, as well as the profanation of the sepulchres of the ancestors of the royal family, the burning of the bones of Louis XI. and of the heart of Francis II.

The Machiavellian policy was Catherine's guide; bitter experience had robbed her of all faith in humanity--she had learned to despise it and the judgment of her contemporaries. At first she was amiable and polite, seemingly intent upon pleasing those with whom she talked; in fact, it is said that she was then more often accused of excessive mildness and moderation than of the violence and cruelty which later characterized her. Experience having taught her how to deal with people, she never lost her self-control.

Subsequent history shows that any gentle and conciliatory policy of Catherine was merely a method of furthering her own interests, and was therefore not the outcome of any inborn feeling of sympathy or womanly tenderness. Whether her signing of the Edict of Saint-Germain, admitting the Protestants to all employments and granting them the privilege of Calvinistic worship in two cities of every province, and her refusal, upon the urgent solicitations of her son-in-law, Philip II., to persecute heretics were really snares laid for the Huguenots, is a matter which historians have not decided.

Inasmuch as the entire history of France plays about the personality of Catherine de' Medici, no attempt will be made to give a detailed chronological account of her career; the results, rather than the events themselves, will be given. M. Saint-Amand, in his work on French Women of the Valois Court, presents one of the strongest pictures drawn of Catherine. We shall follow him in the greater part of this sketch.

According to some historians, Catherine was a mere intriguer, without

talent or ability, living but in the moment, often caught in her own snares; according to others, by her intelligence, ability, and strength of character she advanced a cause truly national--that of French unity; thus, she worked either the ruin or the salvation of France. Michelet calls her a nonentity, a stage queen with merely the externals--the attire--of royalty, remaining exactly on a level with the rulers of the smaller Italian principalities, contriving everything and fearing everything, with no more heart than she had sense or temperament. Being a female, she loved her young; she loved the arts, but cared to cultivate only their externalities. In this, however, Michelet goes to an extreme; for no woman ever lived who had so great a talent for intrigues and politics as she--a very type of the deceit and cunning which were inherent in her race. If she were not important, had not wielded so much influence and decided the fate of so many great men, women, and even states, she would not be the subject of so much writing, of such fierce denunciation and strong praise. To her family, France owes her finest palaces, her masterpieces of art--painting, bookmaking, printing, binding, sculpture.

M. Saint-Amand declares that "isolated from her contemporaries, Catherine de' Medici is a monster; brought back within the circle of their passions and their theories, she once more becomes a woman." But Catherine was the instigator, the embodiment of all that is vice, deceit, cunning, trickery, wickedness, and bold intrigue; she set the example, and her ladies followed her in all that she did; "the heroines bred in her school (and what woman was not in her school?) imitate, with docility, the examples she gives them." She was not only the type of her civilization,--brutal, gross, immoral, elegant, polished, and mondain,--but she was also its leader.

Greatness of soul, real moral force, strict virtue, are not attributes of the sixteenth-century woman--they are isolated and rare exceptions; these Catherine did not possess. Nor was she influenced deeply by her environments; the latter but encouraged and developed those qualities which were hers inherently,--will, intelligence, inflexible perseverance, tenacity of purpose, unscrupulousness, cruelty; hence, to say "She is the victim rather than the inspiration of the corruption of her time" is misleading, to say the least. If, upon

her arrival at court, "she at once pleased every one by her grace and affability, modest air, and, above all, by her extreme gentleness," she could not have changed, say her defenders, into the perfidious, wicked, and cruel creature she is said to have become as soon as she stepped into power. "During the reign of Henry II., she wisely avoided all danger; faithful to her wifely duties, she gave no cause for scandal, and, realizing that she was not strong enough to overcome her all-powerful rival, she bided her time. She was loved and respected by everyone for her personal qualities and her benevolence." But why may it not be true that all this was but part of her politics, the politics in which she had been educated? Wise from experience, she foresaw the future and what was in store for her if she remained prudent and made the best of the surroundings until the time should come when she could strike suddenly and boldly.

Brought up from infancy amidst snares, intrigues, the clash of arms, the furious shouts of popular insurrections, tempests, and storms, she could not escape the influence of her early environment. Her talent for studying and penetrating the designs of her enemies, for facing or avoiding dangers with such sublime calmness and prudence, was partly inherited, partly acquired. That spirit she took with her to France, where her experience was widened and her opportunities for the study of human nature were increased.

It is not generally known that her mother was a French woman--a Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne, daughter of Jean, Count of Boulogne, and Catherine of Bourbon, daughter of the Count of Vendôme; thus, her gentler nature was a French product. Her mother and father both died when she was but twenty-two days old, and from that time until her marriage she was cast about from place to place. But from the very first she showed that talent of adapting herself to her surroundings, living amidst intrigues and discords and yet making friends. She has been called "the precocious heiress of the craftiness of her progenitors."

In her thirteenth year, after being sought by many powerful princes, Clement VII. (her greatuncle), in order to secure himself against the powerful Charles V., married her to Henry, Duke of Orleans, the second son of Francis I. Even at that early age she was fully aware of all

the dreariness and danger attached to positions of power, and knew that the art of governing was not an easy one. She had studied Machiavelli's famous work, *“The Prince”*, which had been dedicated to her father, and it was from it, as well as from her ancestors, that she derived her wisdom and astuteness. Her childhood had prepared her for the work of the future, and she went at it with caution and reserve until she was sure of her ground.

She first proceeded to study the king, Francis I., watching his actions, extracting his secrets; a fine huntress and at his side constantly, she pleased him and gained his favor. Brantôme says she was subtle and diplomatic, quickly learning the craft of her profession; she sought friends among all classes and ranks, directing her overtures specially toward the ladies of the court, whom she soon won and gathered about her.

In 1536 the dauphin died, and Catherine's husband became heir to the throne of France. Though they had been married three years, no offspring had resulted, which unfortunate circumstance made her position a most uncertain one, especially as Diana of Poitiers was then at the height of her power, controlling Henry absolutely. A furious rivalry sprang up between the Duchesse d'Etampes, mistress of Francis I., and Diana and Catherine; the two mistresses formed two parties, and a war of slanders, calumnies, and unpleasant epigrams ensued. Queen Eleanor, the second wife of Francis I., took no active part, thus leaving all power in the hands of the mistress of her husband. (It was at this time that the Emperor Charles V. gained the Duchesse d'Etampes over to his cause.) Poets and artists, politicians and men of genius took sides, extolling the beauty of the one they championed. Catherine, although befriended and treated with apparent respect by Diana, remained a good friend to both women, thus evincing her tact. By keeping her own personality in the background, she won the esteem of both her husband and the king.

Brantôme leaves a picture of Catherine at this time: "She was a fine and ample figure; very majestic, yet agreeable and very gentle when necessary; beautiful and gracious in appearance, her face fair and her throat white and full, very white in body likewise.... Moreover, she dressed superbly, always having some pretty innovation. In brief,

she had beauties fitted to inspire love. She laughed readily, her disposition was jovial, and she liked to jest." M. Saint-Amand continues: "The artistic elegance that surrounded her whole person, the tranquil and benevolent expression of her countenance, the good taste of her dress, the exquisite distinction of her manners, all contributed to her charm. And then she was so humble in the presence of her husband! She so carefully avoided whatever might have the semblance of reproach! She closed her eyes with such complaisance! Henry told himself that it would be difficult to find another woman so well-disposed, another wife so faithful to her duties, another princess so accomplished in point of instruction and intelligence. The ménage à trois (household of three) was continued, therefore, and if the dauphin loved his mistress, he certainly had a friendship for his wife. And, on her part, whenever she felt an inclination to complain of her lot, Catherine bethought herself that if she quitted her position she would probably find no refuge but the cloister, and that--taking it all around--the court of France (in spite of the humiliations and vexations one might experience there) was an abode more desirable than a convent;" this, then, is the secret of her submission. In spite of her beauty, mildness, and distinction of manner, she could not overcome the prestige of Diana.

After nine years, Catherine was still without children and began to fear the fate in store for her; but when she gave birth to a son in 1543, she felt assured that divorce no longer threatened her and she resolved that as soon as she came into power she would be revenged upon her enemies and Diana of Poitiers. When, in 1547, her husband succeeded his father as King of France, she did not feel that the time had yet arrived to interfere in any social or domestic arrangements or affairs of state; not until ten years later did she show the first sign of remarkable statesmanship or ability as a politician.

After the battle and capture of Saint-Quentin, France was in a most deplorable state; the enemy was believed to be beneath the walls of Paris; everybody was fleeing; the king had gone to Compiègne to muster a new army. Catherine was alone in Paris "and of her own free will went to the Parliament in full state, accompanied by the cardinals, princes, and princesses; and there, in the most impressive language, she set forth the urgent state of affairs at the moment.... With so

much sentiment and eloquence that she touched the heart of everybody, the queen then explained to the Parliament that the king had need of three hundred thousand livres, twenty-five thousand to be paid every two months; and she added that she would retire from the place of session, so as not to interfere with the liberty of discussion; accordingly, she retired to another room. A resolution to comply with the wishes of her majesty was voted, and the queen, having resumed her place, received a promise to that effect. A hundred nobles of the city offered to give at once three thousand francs apiece. The queen thanked them in the sweetest form of words, and thus terminated this session of Parliament--with so much applause for her majesty and such lively marks of satisfaction at her behavior, that no idea can be given of them. Throughout the city, nothing was spoken of but the queen's prudence and the happy manner in which she proceeded in this enterprise" (Guizot). From this act dates Catherine's entrance into political consideration.

During the reign of Francis II., Catherine de' Medici exercised no influence at court, the king being completely under the dominion of his wife and the Duke of Guise, who was not favorable to the queen-mother's schemes and policies. Catherine, however, was plotting; caring little about religion so long as it did not further her plans, she connected herself with the Huguenots; her scheme was to bring the Guises to destruction and to form a council of regency which, while composed of the Huguenot leaders, was to be under her guidance. As this plan failed, bringing ruin to many princes, she deserted the Huguenots and allied herself with the Catholics.

She is next found attempting the assassination of the Duke of Condé, but she failed to accomplish that crime because her son, the king, refused his consent. Soon after, Francis II. died, it is said from the effect of poison dropped into his ear while he was sleeping; it is probable that this crime was committed at the instigation of the mother, since by his death and the accession of Charles IX. she became regent (1560). She was then all-powerful and in a position to exercise her long dormant talents.

Her first plan was to incapacitate all her children by plunging them "into such licentious pleasure and voluptuous dissipation

that they were speedily unfitted for mental activity or exertion." Most unprejudiced historians credit her with the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew; she is said to have boasted about it to Catholic governments and excused it to Protestant powers. For a number of years, she had been planning the destruction of the Huguenot princes, and as early as 1565 she and Charles IX. had an interview with the Duke of Alva (representative of Philip II), to consult as to the means of delivering France from heretics. It was decided that "this great blessing could not have accomplishment save by the deaths of all the leaders of the Huguenots."

That fearful crime, the bloody Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, is familiar to everyone. The only excuse offered for this most heinous of Catherine's many offences is her intense sentiment of national unity; the actual reason for it is to be sought in the fact that as long as the Protestants retained their prestige and influence, Catherine and her Catholic party could not do as they pleased, could not gain absolute control over the government. History holds her more responsible than it does her weak son. The climax came on the occasion of the wedding of Marguerite of Valois with the Prince of Navarre, which meant the union of the branches--the Catholic and the Protestant. This resulted in the first breach between the king and Catherine; the latter at that time perpetrated one of her dastardly deeds by poisoning the mother of the Prince of Navarre--Jeanne d'Albret, her bitter enemy.

After the death of Charles IX., Henry III. was the sole survivor of the four sons of Catherine. Although her power was limited during his reign, she managed to continue her murderous plans and accomplished the death of Henry of Guise and his brother the cardinal, which crime united the majority of the Catholics of France against the king and was the cause of his assassination in 1589. This ended the power of Catherine de' Medici; when she died, no one rejoiced, no one lamented. Wherever she had turned her eyes, she had seen nothing but occasions for uneasiness and sadness; she had retired from court, feeling her helplessness and disgrace as well as the decline in power of that son in whom her hopes were centred. She decided to reënter the scene of action and save Henry. The stormy scenes of the Barricades and the League and the murder of the Duke of Guise hastened her death, which

occurred in 1589.

Catherine de' Medici may rightfully be called the initiator and organizer of social and court etiquette and courtesy--of conventional and social laws. However great her political activity, she made herself deeply felt in the social and moral worlds also. She taught her husband the secret of being king; she introduced the lever audience; in the afternoon of every day, she held a reunion of all the ladies of the court, at which the king was to be found after dinner and every lord entertained the lady he most loved; two hours were spent in this pleasure which was continued after supper if there were no balls; bitter raileries and anything that passed the restrictions of good company were forbidden.

Her ladies of honor obeyed her as they would their God. Marguerite of Valois said of her: "I did not dare to speak to her, and when she looked at me I trembled for fear of having done something that displeased her." Ladies who had been delinquent were stripped and beaten with lashes; for correction--frequently for mere pastime--she would have them undressed and slapped vigorously with the back of the hand. Françoise of Rohan, cousin of Jeanne d'Albret, wrote the following poem:

"Plus j'ai de toi souvent esté battue,
Plus mon amour s'efforce et s'évertue
De regretter ceste main qui me bat;
Car ce mal-là m'estait plaisant esbat.
Or, adieu donc la main dont la rigueur
Je préférerais à tout bien et honneur."

[The more often I have been struck by you, the more my love struggles and strives to regret the hand that beats me; for that punishment was a pleasant pastime for me. Now farewell to the hand whose rigor I preferred to every fortune and honor.]

The following portrait and poetry, taken from M. Saint-Amand, does the subject full justice: "Catherine de' Medici represented with a sinister glance, deadly mien, mysterious and savage aspect--a spectre, not a woman--is not true to nature. Her self-possession, cool cunning,

supreme elegance, imperturbable tranquillity, calmness, moderation, noble serenity, and dignified poise, gave her an individuality such as few women ever possessed. Gentle in crime and tragedy, polite like an executioner toward his victim--this Machiavellianism which is equal to every trial, which nothing alarms or surprises, and which with tranquil dexterity makes sport of every law of morality and humanity--this is the real character of Catherine de' Medici." The following burlesque poetry was composed for her:

"La reine qui ci-git fut un diable et un ange,
Toute pleine de blâme et pleine de louange,
Elle soutint l'Etat, et l'Etat mit à bas;
Elle fit maints accords et pas moins de débats;
Elle enfanta trois rois et trois guerres civiles,
Fit bâtir des châteaux et ruiner des villes,
Fit bien de bonnes lois et de mauvais édits.
Souhaite-lui, passant, enfer et paradis."

[The queen lying here was both devil and angel, blamed and praised; she both put down and upheld the state; she caused many an agreement and no end of disputes; she produced three kings and three civil wars; she built castles and ruined cities, made many good laws and many bad decrees. Wish her, passer-by, hell and paradise.]

With the reign of Henry IV.--the first king of the house of Bourbon, and the first king of the sixteenth century with a will of his own and the courage to assert it--begins a period of revelling, debauch, and the most depraved immorality. Three mistresses in turn controlled him--morally, not politically.

Henry was master of his own will, and, had he desired to do so, could have overcome his evil tendencies; instead, he openly countenanced and even encouraged dissoluteness and elegant debauchery, as long as he himself was not deprived of the lady upon whom his capricious fancy happened to fall. His advances were but seldom repulsed; but upon making his usual audacious proposals to the Marquise de Guercheville, he was informed that she was of too insignificant a house to be the king's wife and of too good a race to be his mistress; and when the king, in spite of this rebuff, made her lady of honor to his wife,

Marie de' Medici, she continued to resist him and remained virtuous. Such types of purity, honor, and moral courage were very exceptional during this reign.

The three principal mistresses of this sovereign represent three phases of influence and three periods of his life. Corisande d'Andouins, Comtesse de Guiche and Duchesse de Gramont, fascinated him for eight years, while he was King of Navarre (1582-1590); to her he was deeply attached, and recompensed her for her devotion; this is called his chevaleresque period. The beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrées, Duchesse de Beaufort, was called his mate after victory; "she refined, sharpened, softened, and tamed his customs; she made him king of the court instead of the field." It was she who ventured to meddle in his politics, she whom Marguerite of Valois, his wife, so detested that she refused to consent to a divorce as long as Gabrielle (by whom he had several children) remained his mistress. The latter even went so far as to demand the baptism, as a child of France, of her son by the king. Sully, in a rage, declared there were no "children of France," and took the order to the king, who had it destroyed; he then asked his minister to go to his mistress and satisfy her, "in so far as you can." To his efforts she replied: "I am aware of all, and do not care to hear any more; I am not made as the king is, whom you persuade that black is white." Upon receiving this report, the king said: "Here, come with me; I will let you see that women have not the possession of me that certain malignant spirits say they have." Accompanied by Sully, he immediately went to the Duchesse de Beaufort, and, taking her by the hand, said: "Now, madame, let us go into your room, and let nobody else enter except Rosny. I want to speak to you both and teach you how to be good friends." Then, having closed the door, holding Gabrielle with one hand and Rosny with the other, he said: "Good God, madame! What is the meaning of this? So you would vex me from sheer wantonness of heart in order to try my patience? By God, I swear to you that, if you continue these fashions of going on, you will find yourself very much out in your expectations! I see quite well that you have been put up to all this pleasantries in order to make me dismiss a servant whom I cannot do without, and who has served me loyally for five-and-twenty years. By God, I will do nothing of the kind! And I declare to you that if I were reduced to such a necessity as to choose between losing one or the other, I could better do without ten

mistresses like you than one servant like him." Shortly after this episode, Gabrielle died so suddenly that she was supposed to have been poisoned. Immediately after her death the divorce was granted, and Henry married Marie de' Medici.

The third mistress, Henriette de Balzac d'Entragues, Marquise de Verneuil, who led Henry IV. along a path of the worst debauchery, gained control over him by lewd, lascivious methods. While negotiations were being carried on for his divorce from Marguerite, only a few weeks after the death of Gabrielle, he signed a promise to marry Henriette; this, however, he failed to keep. She, more than any other of his mistresses, was the cause of national distress and of more than one ruinous war. When, after the marriage of the king to Marie de' Medici, Henriette began to nag, rail, intrigue, and conspire, she was disgraced by Henry, who at least had the courage to honor his own family above that of his mistresses. She is accused of having had, solely from motives of revenge, a hand in the death of the king.

Thus, around the queens-regent and the mistresses of the kings of France in the sixteenth century there is constant intriguing, murder, assassination, immorality, and debauchery, jealousy and revenge, marriage and divorce, honor and disgrace, despotism and final repentance and misery. The greatest and lowest of these women was Catherine de' Medici; Diana of Poitiers was famed as the most marvellously beautiful woman in France, and she was the most powerful and intelligent mistress until the time of Mme. de Pompadour. Amid all this bribery and corruption, elegant and refined immorality, there are some few types that represent education, family life, purity, and culture.

LXXIII. TO GEORGE SAND

Wednesday night [late 1867]

Dear master, dear friend of the good God, "let us talk a little of Dozenval," let us roar at M. Thiers! Can a more triumphant imbecile, a more abject dabster, a more stercoraceous bourgeois be found! No, nothing can give the idea of the puking with which this old diplomatic idiot inspires me in piling up his stupidity on the dung-hill of bourgeoisie! Is it possible to treat philosophy, religion, peoples, liberty, the past and future, history, and natural history, everything and more yet, with an incoherence more inept and more childish! He seems to me as everlasting as mediocrity! He overwhelms me!

But the fine thing is the brave national guards whom he stuffed in 1848, who are beginning to applaud him again! What infinite madness! That proves that everything consists of temperament. Prostitutes,--like France,--always have a weakness for old buffoons.

Furthermore, I shall try in the third part of my novel (when I reach the reaction that followed the days of June) to insert a panegyric about him a propos of his book: *De la propriete*, and I hope that he will be pleased with me.

What form should one take to express occasionally one's opinion on the things of this world, without the risk of passing later for an imbecile? It is a tough problem. It seems to me that the best thing is simply to depict the things which exasperate one. To dissect is to take vengeance. Well! it is not he with whom I am angry, nor with the others but with OURS.

If they had paid more attention to the education of the SUPERIOR classes, delaying till later the agricultural meetings; in short, if the head had been put above the stomach, should we have been likely to be where we are now?

I have just read, this week, Buchez' Preface to his Histoire parlementaire. Many inanities which burden us today come from that among other things.

And now, it is not good of you to say that I do not think of "my old Troubadour"; of whom then, do I think? perhaps of my wretched book? but that is more difficult and less agreeable.

How long do you stay at Cannes?

After Cannes shan't you return to Paris? I shall be there towards the end of January.

In order to finish my book in the spring of 1869, I must not give myself a week of holiday; that is why I do not go to Nohant. It is always the story of the Amazons. In order to draw the bow better they crushed their breast. It is a fine method after all.

Adieu, dear master, write to me, won't you?

I embrace you tenderly.

LXXIV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croisset
Nohant, 31 December, 1867

I don't agree with you at all that it is necessary to destroy the breast to draw a bow. I have quite a contrary belief which I follow, and I think that it is good for many others, probably for the majority. I have just developed my idea on that subject in a novel which has been sent to the Revue and will appear after About's. I think that the artist ought to live according to his nature as much as possible. To him who loves struggle, warfare; to him who loves women, love; to an old fellow like me who loves nature, travel and flowers, rocks, fine landscapes, children also, the family, all that stirs the emotions, that combats moral anemia.

I think that art always needs a palette overflowing with soft or striking colors according to the subject of the picture; the artist is an instrument on which everything ought to play before he plays on others; but all that is perhaps not applicable to a mind like yours which has acquired much and now has only to digest. I shall insist on one point only, that the physical being is necessary to the moral being and that I fear for you some day a deterioration of health which will force you to suspend your work and let it grow cold.

Well, you are coming to Paris the beginning of January and we shall see each other; for I shall not go until after the New Year. My children have made me promise to spend that day with them, and I could not resist, in spite of the great necessity of moving. They are so sweet! Maurice has an inexhaustible gaiety and invention. He has made for his marionette theatre, marvelous scenery, properties, and machinery and the plays which they give in that ravishing box are incredibly fantastic.

The last one was called 1870. One sees in it, Isidore with Antonelli commanding the brigands of Calabria, trying to regain his throne and to re-establish the papacy. Everything is in the future; at the end the widow Euphemia marries the Grand Turk, the only remaining sovereign. It is true that he is a former DEMOCRAT and is recognized as none other than the great tumbler Coquenbois when unmasked. These plays last till two o'clock in the morning and we are crazy on coming out of them. We sup till five o'clock. There is a performance twice a week, and the rest of the time they make the properties, and the play continues with the same characters, going through the most incredible adventures.

The public is composed of eight or ten young people, my three great nephews, and sons of my old friends. They get excited to the point of yelling. Aurore is not admitted; the plays are not suited to her age. As for me, I am so amused that I become exhausted. I am sure that you would be madly amused by it also; for there is a splendid fire and abandon in these improvisations; and the characters done by Maurice have the appearance of living beings, of a burlesque life that is real and impossible at the same time; it seems like a dream.

That is how I have been living for the ten days that I have not been working.

Maurice gives me this recreation in my intervals of repose that coincide with his. He brings to it as much ardor and passion as to his science. He has a truly charming nature and one never gets bored with him. His wife is also charming, quite large just now, always moving, busying herself with everything, lying down on the sofa twenty times a day, getting up to run after her child, her cook, her husband, who demands a lot of things for his theatre, coming back to lie down again; crying out that she feels ill and bursting into shrieks of laughter at a fly that circles about; sewing layettes, reading the papers with fervor, reading novels which make her weep; weeping also at the marionettes when there is a little sentiment, for there is some of that too. In short a personality and a type: she sings ravishingly, she gets angry, she gets tender, she makes succulent dainties TO SURPRISE US WITH, and every day of our vacation there is a little fete which she organizes.

Little Aurore promises to be very sweet and calm, understanding in a marvelous manner what is said to her and YIELDING TO REASON at two years of age. It is very extraordinary and I have never seen it before. It would be disquieting if one did not feel a great serenity in that little brain.

But how I am gossiping with you! Does all this amuse you? I should like this chatty letter to substitute for one of those suppers of ours which I too regret, and which would be so good here with you, if you were not a stick-in-the-mud, who won't let yourself be dragged away to LIFE FOR LIFE'S SAKE. Ah! when one is on a vacation, how work, logic, reason seem strange CONTRASTS! One asks whether one can ever return to that ball and chain.

I tenderly embrace you, my dear old fellow, and Maurice thinks your letter so fine that he is going to put the phrases and words at once in the mouth of his first philosopher. He bids me embrace you for him.

Madame Juliette Lambert [Footnote: Afterwards, Madame Edmond Adam.] is really charming; you would like her a great deal, and then you have it 18 degrees above zero down there, and here we are in the snow. It is severe; moreover, I rarely go out, and my dog himself doesn't want to go out. He is not the least amazing member of society. When he is called Badinguet, he lies on the ground ashamed and despairing, and sulks all the evening.

LXXV. TO GEORGE SAND

1st January, 1868

It is unkind to sadden me with the recital of the amusements at Nohant, since I cannot share them. I need so much time to do so little that I have not a minute to lose (or gain), if I want to finish my dull old book by the summer of 1869.

I did not say it was necessary to suppress the heart, but to restrain it, alas! As for the regime that I follow which is contrary to the laws of hygiene, I did not begin yesterday. I am accustomed to it. I have, nevertheless, a fairly seasoned sense of fatigue, and it is time that my second part was finished, after which I shall go to Paris. That will be about the end of the month. You don't tell me when you return from Cannes.

My rage against M. Thiers is not yet calmed, on the contrary! It idealizes itself and increases.

LA VILLA PAMPHILI

A***

Rome, 25 mars 185...

La villa Pamphili n'a pas été abîmée dans les derniers événements, comme on l'a dit. Ni Garibaldi, ni les Français n'y ont laissé de traces de dévastation sérieuse. Ses pins gigantesques sont, en grande partie, encore debout. Elle est bien plus menacée de périr par l'abandon que par la guerre, car elle porte l'empreinte de cette indifférence et de ce dégoût qui sont, à ce que l'on me dit, le cachet général de toutes les habitations princières de la ville et des environs.

C'est un bel endroit, une vue magnifique sur Rome, l'Agro-Romano et la mer. De petites collines un peu plantées, chose rare ici, font un premier plan agréable. Le palais est encore de ceux qui résolvent le problème d'être très-vastes à l'intérieur et très-petits d'aspect extérieur.

En général, tout me paraît trop petit ou trop grand, depuis que je suis à Rome. Quant à la végétation, cela est certain, les arbres de nos climats y sont pauvres, et les essences intermédiaires n'y atteignent pas la santé et l'ampleur qu'elles ont dans nos campagnes et dans nos jardins.

En revanche, les plantes indigènes sont d'une taille démesurée, et le même contraste pénible que l'on remarque dans les édifices se fait sentir dans la nature. On dirait que cette dernière est aristocrate comme la société et qu'elle ne veut pas souffrir de milieu entre les géants et les pygmées, sur cette terre de la papauté. Ces ruines de la ville des empereurs au milieu des petites bâtisses de la ville moderne, et ces énormes pins d'Italie au milieu des humbles bosquets et des courts buissons de la villégiature, me font l'effet de magnifiques cardinaux entourés de misérables capucins. Et puis, quels que soient les repoussoirs, il y a un manque constant de proportion entre eux et l'arène désolée qu'ils dominent. Cette campagne de Rome, vue de haut et

terminée par une autre immensité, la mer, est effrayante d'étendue et de nudité. Rome elle-même, toute vaste qu'elle est, s'y perd. Ses lignes, tant vantées par les artistes italianomanes, sont courtes et crues, crues surtout; et ce soleil, que l'on me disait devoir tout enchanter, un beau et chaud soleil, en effet! accuse plus durement encore ces contours déjà si secs. Je comprends maintenant les ingristes, que je trouvais un peu trop livrés à la convention, au style, comme ils disent. Je vois qu'ils ont, au contraire, trop de conscience et d'exactitude, et que la réalité prend ici cette physionomie de froide âpreté qui me gênait chez eux. Il faudrait adoucir ce caractère au lieu de le faire prédominer, car ce n'est pas là sa beauté, c'est son défaut.

Le séjour de Rome doit nécessairement entraîner à cette manière de traduire la nature. L'oeil s'y fait, l'âme s'en éprend. C'est pour cela, indépendamment de son grand savoir, que M. Ingres a eu une école homogène. Mais, si on ne se défend pas de cette impression, on risque de tomber dans les tons froids ou criards, dans les modelés insuffisants, dans les contours incrustés au mur, de la fresque primitive.

«Eh bien, et les fresques de Raphaël, et celles de Michel-Ange, les avez-vous vues? pourquoi n'en parlez-vous pas?»

Je vous entends d'ici. Permettez-moi de ne pas vous répondre encore. Nous sommes à la villa Pamphili, dans la région des fleurs. Oh! ici, les fleurs se plaisent; ici, elles jonchent littéralement le sol, aussitôt qu'un peu de culture remue cette terre excellente abandonnée de l'homme. Dans les champs, autour des bassins, sur les revers des fossés, partout où elles peuvent trouver un peu de nourriture assainie par la pioche, les fleurs sauvages s'en donnent à coeur-joie et prennent des ébats ravissants. A la villa Pamphili, une vaste prairie est diaprée d'anémones de toutes couleurs. Je ne sais quelle tradition attribue ce semis d'anémones à la Béatrix Cenci. Je ne vous oblige pas d'y croire. Dans nos pays de la Gaule, les traditions ont de la valeur. Nos paysans ne sont pas gascons, même en Gascogne. Ils répètent naïvement, sans le comprendre, et par conséquent sans le commenter, ce que leur ont conté leurs aïeux. Ici, tout prolétaire est cicérone, c'est-à-dire résolu à vous conter des merveilles pour vous amuser et vous faire payer ses frais d'imagination. Il y a donc à se méfier beaucoup. M. B..., jadis à la recherche de la fontaine Égérie, prétend qu'en un seul jour, on lui

en a montré dix-sept.

Il y a à Pamphili d'assez belles eaux, des grottes, des cascades, des lacs et des rivières. C'est grand pour un jardin particulier, et le _rococo_, dont je ne suis pas du tout l'ennemi, y est plus agréable que ce qui nous en reste en France. C'est plus franchement adopté, et ils ont employé pour leurs rocailles des échantillons minéralogiques d'une grande beauté. Tivoli et la Solfatare qui l'avoisine ont fourni des pétrifications curieuses et des débris volcaniques superbes à toutes les villas de la contrée. Ces fragments étranges, couverts de plantes grimpantes, de folles herbes, et de murmurantes eaux, sont très-amusants à regarder, je vous assure.

Pardon, cher ami. Vous m'avez dit souvent que j'avais de l'intelligence; mais, sans vous offenser, je crois que vous vous êtes bien trompé et que je ne suis qu'un âne. Je crois aussi, et plus souvent que je n'ose vous le dire, que j'ai eu bien tort de me croire destiné à faire de l'art. Je suis trop contemplatif, et je le suis à la manière des enfants. Je voudrais tout saisir, tout embrasser, tout comprendre, tout savoir, et puis, après ces bouffées d'ambition déplacée, je me sens retomber de tout mon poids sur un rien, sur un brin d'herbe, sur un petit insecte qui me charme et me passionne, et qui, tout à coup, par je ne sais quel prestige, me paraît aussi grand, aussi complet, aussi important dans ma vie d'émotion que la mer, les volcans, les empires avec leurs souverains, les ruines du Colisée, le dôme de Saint-Pierre, le pape, Raphaël et tous les maîtres, et la Vénus de Médicis par-dessus le marché.

Quelle influence me rend idiot à ce point? Ne me le demandez pas, je l'ignore. Peut-être que j'aime trop la nature pour lui donner jamais une interprétation raisonnable. Je l'aime pour ses modesties adorables autant que pour ses grandeurs terrifiantes. Ce qu'elle cache dans un petit caillou aux couleurs harmonieuses, dans une violette au suave parfum, me pénètre, en de certains moments, jusqu'à l'attendrissement le plus stupide. Un autre jour, j'aurai la fantaisie de voler sur les nuages ou sur la crête des vagues courroucées, d'enjamber les montagnes, de plonger dans les volcans, et d'embrasser, d'un coup d'oeil, la configuration de la terre. Mais, si tout cela m'était permis, si Dieu consentait à ce que je fusse un pur esprit, errant dans les abîmes de

l'univers, je crois que, dans cette haute condition, je resterais bon prince, et que, tout à coup, au milieu de ma course effrénée, je m'arrêterais pour regarder, en badaud, une mouche tombée sur le nez d'une carpe, ou, en écolier, un cerf-volant emporté dans la nue.

Je cache mon infirmité le mieux que je puis; mais je vous confesse, à vous, que, sur cette terre classique des arts, je me sens las d'avance de tout ce que j'ai à voir, à sentir et à juger. Juger, moi! pourquoi faire? J'aime mieux ne rien dire et penser fort peu. Pardonnez-moi d'être ainsi: j'ai tout souffert dans la vie de civilisation! j'y ai tant de fois désiré l'absence de prévoyance et le laisser aller complet de la pensée! Je voudrais encore quelquefois être bien seul dans le fond d'un antre noir, comme les lavandières de l'_acqua argentina_, et chanter quelque chose que je ne comprendrais pas moi-même. Il me faut faire un immense effort pour passer brusquement, de mes rêveries, à la conversation raisonnable ou enjouée, comme il convient avec des êtres de mon espèce et de mon temps.

Je regardais dans les eaux de la villa Pamphili un beau petit canard de Chine barbotant auprès d'une cascabelle. «Il est donc tout seul? demandai-je à un jardinier qui passait.--Tiens! il est seul aujourd'hui, répondit-il avec insouciance. _L'oiseau_ lui aura mangé sa femme ce matin. Il y en avait ici une belle bande, de ces canards-là; mais il y a encore plus d'oiseaux de proie, et, ma foi, celui-ci est le dernier.»

Là-dessus, il passa sans s'inquiéter de mettre le pauvre canard à l'abri de la _serre cruelle_. Je levai les yeux et je vis cinq ou six de ces brigands ailés décrivant leurs cercles funestes au-dessus de lui. Ils attendaient d'avoir dépecé sa femelle et d'avoir un peu d'appétit pour venir le prendre. Je ne saurais vous dire quelle tristesse s'empara de moi. C'était une image de la fatalité. La mort plane comme cela sur la tête de ceux qu'on aime. Si elle les prend, qu'a-t-on à faire en ce monde, sinon de barboter dans un coin, comme ce canard hébété qui se baigne au soleil en attendant son heure?

L'abandon de ces oiseaux étrangers, objets de luxe dans la demeure princière, était, du reste, très en harmonie avec celui qui se faisait sentir dans le parc. La même malpropreté que dans les rues de Rome, les mêmes souillures sur les fleurs que sur les pavés de la ville éternelle. Cela sent le dégoût de la vie. Je crois qu'un spleen profond dévore ici

les grandes existences. Je ne sais si elles se l'avouent, mais cela est écrit sur les pierres de leurs maisons à formes coquettes et sur les riantes perspectives de leurs allées abandonnées. Est-ce la saison encore pluvieuse et incertaine qui fait ce désert dans des lieux si beaux? est-ce la dévotion ou l'ennui, ou la tristesse qui retiennent à Rome ces hôtes ingrats envers le printemps? On dit que toutes les villas sont délaissées ou négligées et que celle-ci est encore une des mieux entretenues. J'ai peine à le croire.

En quittant le parc pour voir les jardins, je fus frappé pourtant de l'activité déployée par un vieux jardinier pour la réparation d'un singulier objet de goût horticole. Je n'ai jamais vu rien de semblable. On me dit que c'est usité dans plusieurs villas et que cela date de la renaissance. J'aurai de la peine à vous expliquer ce que c'est. Figurez-vous un tapis à dessins gigantesques et à couleurs voyantes, étendu sur une terrasse qui tient tout le flanc d'une colline sous les fenêtres du palais. Les dessins sont jolis: ce sont des armoiries de famille, entourées de guirlandes, de noeuds entrelacés, de palmes, de chiffres, de couronnes, de croix et de bouquets. L'ensemble en est riche et les couleurs en sont vives. Mais qu'est-ce que cette mosaïque colossale, ou ce tapis fantastique étalé, en plein air, sur une si vaste esplanade? Il faut en approcher pour le comprendre. C'est un parterre de plantes basses, entrecoupé de petits sentiers de marbre, de faïence, d'ardoise ou de brique, le tout cassé en menus morceaux et semé comme des dragées sur un surtout de table du temps de Louis XV; mais on ne marche pas dans ces sentiers, je pense, car ils sont trop durement cailloutés pour des pieds aristocratiques et trop étroits pour des personnes d'importance. Cela ne sert uniquement qu'à réjouir la vue et absorbe toute la vie d'un jardinier émérite. Les compartiments de chaque écusson ou rosace sont en fleurs faisant touffe basse et drue. Les plantes de la campagne y sont admises, pourvu qu'elles donnent le ton dont on a besoin. Une petite bordure de buis nain ou de myrte, taillée bien court, serpente autour de chaque détail: c'est d'un effet bizarre et minutieux; c'est un ouvrage de patience, et toute la symétrie, toute la recherche, toute la propreté dont les Romains de nos jours sont susceptibles, paraissent s'être réfugiées et concentrées dans l'entretien de cette ornementation végétale et gymnoplastique.

Crime russe, by Alphonse Allais
from *Contes humoristiques - Tome I*, EBook #18262

Ce fut l'excès même de la hideur de cette vieille, je crois bien, qui m'attira chez elle.

Quand, passant dans une ruelle sinistre et transversale, je l'aperçus à sa fenêtre, cette détestable vieille, avec son masque violâtement blafard, ses petits yeux où luisaient toutes les sales luxures, et sa frisottante perruque brune, si manifestement postiche, il me monta au cerveau une bouffée de cette lubricité fangeuse qui vient hanter les rêveries de certains très jeunes hommes et de quelques vieux dégoûtants.

De près, elle était répugnante au-delà de toute expression.

La couperose de ses vieilles joues molles se trouvait encore aggravée par le poudroiment louche d'une veloutine acquise chez une herboriste de onzième classe, sans doute avorteuse.

Des réparations successives à son énorme râtelier avaient mis des dents d'azur trouble à côté d'autres qui semblaient de vieil ivoire.

Et si, en ce moment, je n'avais pas eu l'esprit si calme, je me serais certainement cru le jouet d'un angoissant cauchemar.

Ce n'était pas le besoin qui la poussait à accomplir son immonde profession, car tout, chez elle, sentait l'aisance presque confortable.

Des draps fins et blancs garnissaient le lit, un lit de villageois cossus. Une armoire normande en chêne massif se carrait dans un coin de la chambre avec cet aspect riche, cette apparence--inexplicable par la raison--d'être remplie, qui fait que les gens comme moi distinguent infailliblement, même fermées, les armoires pleines des vides.

D'une voix crapuliforme qu'elle essayait de faire gazouillante, la vieille me causait. Elle disait la gloire de mes bottes.

«Comme tes bottes sont belles!»

Effectivement, mes bottes, ancien cadeau que me fit à Plewna le général Sakapharine, étaient plus belles que nulle langue humaine ne saurait l'exprimer. Je goûtai la joie de contrarier la vieille:

«Mes bottes! Elles sont ignobles; je les ai payées trente-cinq sous, ce matin, à un ramasseur de bouts de cigares, place Maubert.

--Sale blagueur!»

Pendant que la conversation continuait sur ce ton, l'idée me vint, hantise vague d'abord, de tuer cette femme à propos de bottes.

Et je prononçai, à mi-voix, ces mots: à propos de bottes.

Dès lors, la résolution d'assassiner la vieille s'installa en moi, irrémissiblement.

Mon couteau était de ceux qu'on appelle couteaux de Nontron, et qu'on fabrique à Châtellerault.

La lame de ces armes est droite et pointue. Le manche rond se rétrécit vers le bas pour être bien en main, et une large virole mobile empêche que la lame ne se referme.

À un moment, la vieille me tourne le dos. Je lui plantai le coup, très fort et très droit, à une place que je sais. Pendant qu'elle s'affaissait sur les genoux en une posture désespérée, je lui maintenais le couteau dans la plaie, et la large virole empêchait le sang de couler.

Quand elle eut poussé son dernier hou rauque, quand l'hémorragie interne eut achevé de l'étouffer, je pris dans un tiroir de son armoire ses pièces d'or et quelques valeurs, et, refermant la porte sur moi, je m'en allai....

Toute cette scène n'avait pas duré dix minutes, et pas de bruit, pas de sang répandu.

Certes, pour de l'ouvrage bien faite, comme a dit le poète Sarcey,

c'était de l'ouvrage bien faite.

Je me dirigeai vers la maison de ma maîtresse, une jeune femme qui s'appelle Nini et que mes amis ont surnommée Nini Novgorod, depuis que c'est moi son amant.

Un couple de sergents de ville arrivait lentement dans ma direction.

Je ne sais pas, mais leur air tranquille me fit passer à fleur de peau un frisson glacé. Ils me semblaient trop tranquilles.

Alors, effrontément, je plantai dans leurs yeux mon regard hardi, et tous les deux, comme mus par un mouvement machinal portèrent, en passant près de moi, la main à la visière de leur képi.

D'autres gens de police, rencontrés plus loin, et dévisagés de la même façon, me saluèrent aussi, répondant à ma secrète préoccupation.

«Nous vous prenons si peu, semblaient-ils dire, pour un assassin, cher monsieur, que nous n'hésitons pas à vous saluer respectueusement.»

Nini Novgorod n'était pas chez elle. Machinalement, je jetai un coup d'oeil sur une glace du salon et me voilà secoué par le plus joyeux éclat de rire, peut-être, de toute ma vie.

Je m'expliquais mon prestige subit devant les gardiens de la paix.

La virole de mon couteau n'avait pas bouché hermétiquement la blessure de la vieille.

Par la solution de continuité qui permet à la lame de se refermer, avait giclé un léger filet de sang.

Ce filet était venu s'épanouir en rosette sur la boutonnière de ma redingote.

Tous ces imbéciles m'avaient pris pour un officier de la Légion d'honneur.

SUR UNE PISTE by Paul Bourget
from *L'eau profonde – Les pas dans les pas*, EBook #26891

J'ai dit que cet épisode datait de l'automne dernier. J'aurais mieux fait de dire: son dénouement. La portion dramatique de l'aventure ne fut, comme il arrive souvent, que l'explosion d'une mine longtemps creusée. Mais sans un très petit hasard, et bien improbable, ce travail souterrain, eût-il jamais abouti? La vie humaine est ainsi: le nécessaire et le fortuit s'y mêlangent d'une telle façon qu'à regarder ces entrelacs de causes et d'effets on éprouve une impression indémêlable de logique et d'incohérence où seule la foi en une souveraine raison nous permet de pressentir une action providentielle. C'est là un point de vue d'ensemble et que notre philosophie conçoit quand elle s'exerce sur une suite d'années. Cette philosophie reste dépourvue lorsqu'elle essaie d'interpréter dans un pareil sens des événements d'une radicale insignifiance: celui, par exemple, qui précipita la tragédie que j'ai l'intention de raconter,--une visite d'une jeune femme dans un grand magasin de nouveautés!

La jeune femme dont il s'agit et que j'appellerai, en lui conservant son titre,--ce détail a sa petite importance,--la baronne de La Node, était en quête de tapis volants, fort bourgeoisement. Elle avait entendu dire que le grand magasin en question avait reçu un arrivage de vieilles carpettes d'Orient. Elle était donc venue là par ce commencement d'une après-midi de novembre, avec l'espérance qu'elle pourrait, à ce moment de la journée, se faire montrer quelques échantillons, en évitant la foule. Ayant trouvé ce qu'elle cherchait, elle regagnait la sortie d'un pas lent, le regard amusé, malgré elle, aux mille et mille objets de toute provenance et de tout usage, entassés sur les comptoirs, pendus aux murs, accrochés à des tringles, empilés dans des armoires, étalés dans des vitrines. Le tableautin est trop connu pour mériter même un crayon. La jeune baronne était entrée dans le magasin, à deux heures. Il n'en était que trois, et déjà cette foule, qu'elle avait désiré éviter, commençait de la presser de toutes parts. L'énorme bâtisse regorgeait de ce formidable afflux féminin qui semble donner raison aux prophètes de la démocratie. Le rêve du nivellement universel n'est-il pas réalisé dans le dédale d'un pareil emporium? Les diverses classes n'y sont-elles pas confondues, dans un

pêle-mêle extravagant? La modeste épouse du fonctionnaire à dix-huit cents francs y coudoie la compagne du financier juif, dont les bénéfices de bourse se chiffreront, le 31 décembre, par un demi-million. La provinciale, pour laquelle le voyage à Paris est un événement, y frôle l'étrangère qui va de Saint-Petersbourg au Caire et de Cannes à New-York, sur un oui, sur un non, aussi facilement qu'elle est venue ici de son hôtel de la place Vendôme. La fille à la mode, que son automobile de grande marque attend à la porte, croise l'étudiante du quartier Latin qui a trottiné le long des rues, pour épargner au budget de son ménage bohémien les trente centimes du tramway. Le colossal bazar n'a-t-il pas une tentation pour chaque désir, une occasion pour chaque besoin? Même une grande dame authentique, qui n'eût eu, voici cinquante ans, que des fournisseurs personnels, finit par avoir recours au banal et commode caravansérail, quitte à s'y promener, comme faisait Mme de La Node, en dépit de la promiscuité forcée, avec cet air patricien qui ne s'imite pas, qui ne se définit pas. On discerne à peine en quoi il réside. C'est une façon de poser le regard et de porter la tête, de se tenir et de marcher, où il y a de la réserve et de l'assurance, de la fierté et du naturel, un rien de hauteur et de la simplicité, un quant-à-soi tout en nuances. Mais aucune femme, ni aucun homme ne s'y trompe. Certes, Mme de La Node n'avait en elle, quand on analysait sa personne, rien de particulièrement remarquable. Il semblait qu'elle dût passer partout inaperçue. C'était une femme plutôt petite, jolie, d'une joliesse un peu menue, un peu sèche. Elle avait des yeux bruns dont les prunelles se faisaient aisément ternes au repos; des cheveux châains, pareils à tous les cheveux châains; une taille mince, pareille à toutes les tailles minces. Ses toilettes n'offraient, elles non plus, rien de très affirmé, de très voyant. Elle était habillée, ce jour-là, d'une robe de ville, d'un petit velours marron avec un semis de pois blancs, et coiffée d'un chapeau assorti, sans le moindre caractère d'excentricité. Et les acheteurs et les acheteuses qu'elle croisait la suivaient d'un regard plus appuyé, les vendeurs s'avançaient à son approche avec un empressement plus déférent. De ravissants détails: des oreilles coquettement ourlées, des dents très blanches et bien rangées, la finesse de ses mains et de ses pieds, corrigeaient sans doute ce que cet aspect général aurait eu d'indifférent,--n'eût été le _je ne sais quoi_. Mais elle l'avait, ce _je ne sais quoi_, et elle savait qu'elle l'avait. Un léger, un imperceptible pli d'impertinence

flottait, plus encore qu'il ne se creusait, au coin de ses narines minces et de ses lèvres, sensuelles tout ensemble et sans bonté. C'était le défaut de cette physionomie: rendue à elle-même, et quand rien ne suscitait son attention, comme maintenant, il s'en dégageait une maussaderie qui pouvait déceler également l'apathie d'une Parisienne épuisée de frivolités et une extrême surveillance de soi. Cet air inamusable était tellement empreint sur ce visage délicat et inexpressif qu'il décourageait aussitôt l'attention que l'aristocratique allure de la passante avait suscitée.

--«Ce n'est pas la peine d'essayer...» se disaient les vendeurs, qui se rabattaient sur d'autres clientes, d'aspect plus avenant.

--«A quoi bon?...» songeaient les jeunes gens, comme il s'en rencontre toujours dans ces foules, prêts à suivre indéfiniment une femme distinguée, sans l'aborder,--pour en rêver ensuite, non moins indéfiniment. Pourtant, si l'un d'eux se fût attaché aux pas de la visiteuse, il eût vu subitement, à une certaine minute de cette promenade dans les galeries du grand magasin, ces traits, d'une froideur presque impassible, se contracter dans une expression de curiosité aiguë, un éclair s'allumer dans ces prunelles mornes, ce pas indifférent se hâter. Il fallait que, parmi cette foule houleuse qui piétinait et bruissait dans l'atmosphère de plus en plus étouffante, Mme de La Node eût aperçu quelque chose ou quelqu'un qui éveillait en elle des émotions profondes, car cette métamorphose instantanée, et qui, pour l'observateur étranger, eût tenu du miracle, s'était accomplie sur un coup d'oeil. Une silhouette, apparue et reconnue, entre tant d'autres, au bas d'un escalier, y avait suffi; et voici que ses petits pieds précipitaient cette descente, voici qu'elle se haussait par-dessus les épaules dressées devant elle, pour ne pas perdre de la vue la personne dont la seule présence venait de la saisir ainsi. Cette présence n'avait pourtant rien que de très naturel, et cette personne n'était autre qu'une de ses cousines qui était, ou passait pour être une de ses amies intimes, la plus intime, la jeune marquise de Chaligny. Mais Jeanne de La Node avait ses motifs, et de très pressants (la suite de ce récit le démontrera trop), pour attacher une importance extrême aux moindres faits et gestes de cette prétendue amie:

«--Valentine ici?...», se disait-elle donc en se glissant à travers le flot de plus en plus serré des acheteurs. Elle était guidée par la couleur grise de deux larges ailes d'oiseau qui garnissaient le chapeau de Mme de Chaligny, «après qu'elle m'a refusé de sortir ensemble, parce quelle avait à faire des visites? C'était donc un prétexte pour ne pas être avec moi... J'observais bien qu'elle changeait. Elle a des soupçons. Je le répète à Norbert, depuis Deauville... Mais voilà une occasion de l'interroger, ou jamais: ce refus de ma compagnie, et puis qu'elle soit là... Quand on veut savoir la vérité sur les grandes choses, il vaut mieux prendre de tout petits moyens... D'ailleurs, à sa mine, quand elle me verra, je jugerai ce qui en est...»

Ce discours intérieur enveloppait un de ces redoutables secrets comme la vie élégante en cache tant sous ses rites frivoles. De se le prononcer avait mis du rose aux joues d'ordinaire trop pâles de la jeune femme. Ses mouvements avaient pris une agilité qui déjà, malgré les obstacles, la rapprochait de celle qu'elle poursuivait. Encore quelques secondes, elle la rattrapait,--quand, tout d'un coup, elle commença de ralentir son allure, comme si une idée nouvelle la déterminait à maintenir la distance qui la séparait de Mme de Chaligny. C'est qu'en enveloppant, en perscrutant du regard sa cousine qui ne la voyait pas, Mme de La Node venait d'éprouver, en effet, une impression, d'abord confuse et inconsciente, puis précisée jusqu'à devenir le principe d'une nouvelle curiosité: il lui avait semblé que l'autre traversait la foule comme quelqu'un qui cherche à s'y perdre, afin de dépister toute poursuite. La marquise était habillée d'une de ces robes de teinte neutre qui n'attirent pas l'attention. La voilette aux mailles serrées qui moulait son visage avait été choisie épaisse à dessein. Elle marchait vite, en personne extrêmement pressée, et sans prendre garde aux colifichets exposés autour d'elle:

--«Où va-t-elle?...» Cette question n'eut pas plus tôt traversé l'esprit de Jeanne qu'elle y avait répondu mentalement comme auraient fait neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf Parisiennes sur mille.--Où donc peut aller une jolie femme de trente ans et qui se cache?...--Était-il possible pourtant que Valentine, la sévère et prude Valentine, fût vraiment en train de se diriger vers un rendez-vous coupable, ou d'en revenir? Tout dans son caractère protestait contre une pareille

hypothèse. Mme de La Node le savait mieux que n'importe qui, ayant été élevée avec elle, et se trouvant, pour des raisons qui n'étaient pas à sa gloire, au courant des plus intimes secrets de l'existence de sa cousine. Mais quand une femme n'est pas une honnête femme--et Jeanne n'en était pas une--elle ne croit jamais sans réserves à l'irréprochable vertu d'une autre. Que le plus léger indice la mette sur la voie de ce que l'argot du monde appelle «un paquet», et vous la verrez, fût-ce à propos de sa meilleure amie, déployer un génie de soupçon aussi flétrissant que celui d'un vieux magistrat. C'étaient certes des riens et qui pouvaient s'expliquer si simplement: ce refus de sortir à deux, ce prétexte de visites, puis cette entrée dans ce grand magasin! Il suffisait que Mme de Chaligny n'eût pas trouvé la ou les personnes qu'elle allait voir, ou bien qu'en passant rue de Rivoli, devant la principale façade de l'immense maison de nouveautés, l'idée d'un achat en retard lui eût traversé la mémoire. C'était un rien encore, cette mise effacée, ce voile épais, ce glissement presque furtif à travers la foule... Et déjà cette si vague, cette si gratuite hypothèse d'un mystère criminel contre-balançait, dans l'esprit de Jeanne, la longue expérience qu'elle avait de la nature de Valentine, puisqu'elle la suivait de loin, maintenant, et sans l'aborder. Elle la vit, marchant toujours de ce pied qui va droit vers son but, sans une distraction, sans un arrêt, s'engager de galerie en galerie et gagner enfin une porte écartée du magasin, presque à l'angle de la rue Saint-Honoré, en face de la rue Croix-des-Champs. Mme de Chaligny, au moment de pousser l'énorme battant vitré, fut prise dans un groupe d'arrivants. Elle dut attendre une minute et elle se retourna. La poursuivante, qui n'était qu'à quelques mètres, n'eut que le temps, pour n'être pas surprise en flagrant délit de son ignoble espionnage, de se retourner elle-même et de s'absorber dans la contemplation d'un lot d'objets de cuir étalés devant elle. Valentine de Chaligny ne l'avait-elle pas vue, ou bien, l'ayant reconnue, ne s'était-elle pas crue reconnue? Toujours est-il que Jeanne, lorsqu'elle regarda de nouveau, n'aperçut plus les ailes grises du chapeau, son point de repère dans cette course à deux à travers la cohue. Le soupçon grandissant continuait de la posséder avec tant de force qu'elle courut, plutôt qu'elle ne marcha, vers la porte, assez vite pour qu'arrivée sur le trottoir son regard circulaire, et qui fouilla trois rues à la fois, saisît la silhouette à la poursuite de laquelle elle s'acharnait. Mme de Chaligny parlamentait avec le cocher d'un fiacre

évidemment arrêté au passage. Cet homme retenait son cheval impatient au milieu de la rue Saint-Honoré, tout en écoutant l'adresse que lui donnait sa nouvelle cliente, la main sur la portière ouverte. Il fit le geste d'avoir compris. Les ailes grises s'engouffrèrent dans la voiture. La petite main referma la portière, et le cheval partit dans la direction du Louvre, si vite que Mme de La Node désespéra de trouver sur place un véhicule qui lui permît de suivre la piste où le plus inattendu des hasards la jetait. Elle héla un premier cocher qui passait, puis un second. A son appel ils opposèrent, celui-là un insolent silence, l'autre un imperceptible haussement d'épaules. Ils avaient tous deux leur voiture occupée.

--«Que je suis sotte!...» se dit la petite baronne. «Je ne la rattraperais plus maintenant... Il faudrait savoir si elle est sortie de chez elle avec ses chevaux et ses gens...» Et, obéissant machinalement à l'instinct de police soudain éveillé en elle par cette rencontre, elle longeait déjà le trottoir qui va vers la place du Palais-Royal. Elle se préparait à passer la revue des équipages qui attendaient à la queue leu leu. Elle n'eut pas besoin d'une longue recherche pour reconnaître, debout parmi les autres domestiques en livrée qui stationnaient devant la grande porte, Jean, le valet de pied de la marquise. Un peu plus loin le cocher Joseph, assis sur son siège, maintenait les deux chevaux bais, attelés au coupé officiel. Valentine avait exécuté la classique manoeuvre. Elle était descendue de sa voiture à cette entrée pour assurer un alibi à son emploi d'après-midi, en vertu de l'aphorisme du _Misanthrope sans repentir_ : «Avant d'arriver où elle ne veut pas être vue, une femme qui sort va toujours où elle veut qu'on la voie.»--Et, encore une fois, où donc peut aller une jolie femme, et de ce rang, qui ne veut pas qu'on la voie?...

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